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BELOW
THE SNOW LINE

BY

1845

DOUGLAS Wm FRESHFIELD, D.C.L.

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE ALPINE CLUB
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AUTHOR OF "THE EXPLORATION OF THE
CAUCASUS," "UNTO THE HILLS,"
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PREFACE

ALL my life I have been what my climbing friends of the stricter doctrine and practice consider a "picker-up of unconsidered trifles" in the way of mountains. I have wandered as often below the snow line as climbed or plodded above it. I have found interest in easy ascents which offered no scope for gymnastics. I have even confessed to having at times carried an umbrella in place of an ice-axe. In short I have been as much a traveller as a climber.

Well; one cannot always keep the highest company. There are times when nothing but rock and snow becomes monotonous. One cannot often pay a flying visit to the Himalaya or the Rockies; and when can we hope to return to the frosty Caucasus? Nor are our friendly Alps accessible at all seasons. We have, it is true, discovered and taught the younger generation their winter charm and resources. But for Easter holidays they have few attractions and many dangers. The lesser heights have lost their snow-mantles but are not yet green; they exhibit dirty white streaks and patches on a background of brown turf. The avalanches are falling heavily among the upper snows, and travellers who venture on them do so at the risk of a sudden and inglorious entombment. Having tested at this season both the Alps and the Pyrenees I speak not without experience.

The following selections from old records of travel may, I hope, convey to a few kindred spirits suggestions of alternative playgrounds near and far off, accessible at times when the High Alps are practically closed. They include some sub-alpine wanderings under the shadow of Mont Blanc and the Bernina, and two raids into the remote wilds of Japan and Uganda. But for the most part they are a bundle of memories of walks and climbs among the lesser ranges of the Old World, among the mountains of the Riviera, Corsica, Italy, Greece, Bosnia, and Algeria. The granites of Corsica or the marble crags of Carrara may offer even to the modern rock-gymnast suitable occupation. Less arduous athletes—travellers who can walk as well as climb—will reap abundant reward in the narcissus lawns of the Abruzzi, or among the oleanders and asphodels of Greece, the beech forests of Bosnia, or the ilex groves of the Algerian Atlas. To both I would recommend the marvellous panoramas of sea and land which constantly lighten the uphill path of a wanderer on the hilltops that border and overlook the Midland Sea, the "great blue lake" as my constant companion and guide, François Dévouassoud of Chamonix, used to call it.

Nearly fifty years ago I published a little volume called *Italian Alps* which was so far successful that it still brings me from time to time letters of thanks from adventurers in my footsteps. If the following pages have any like success I shall not regret having saved them from oblivion. With one exception they have appeared, though considerably altered in form, in past volumes of the *Alpine Journal*.

D. W. F.

DECEMBER 1922.

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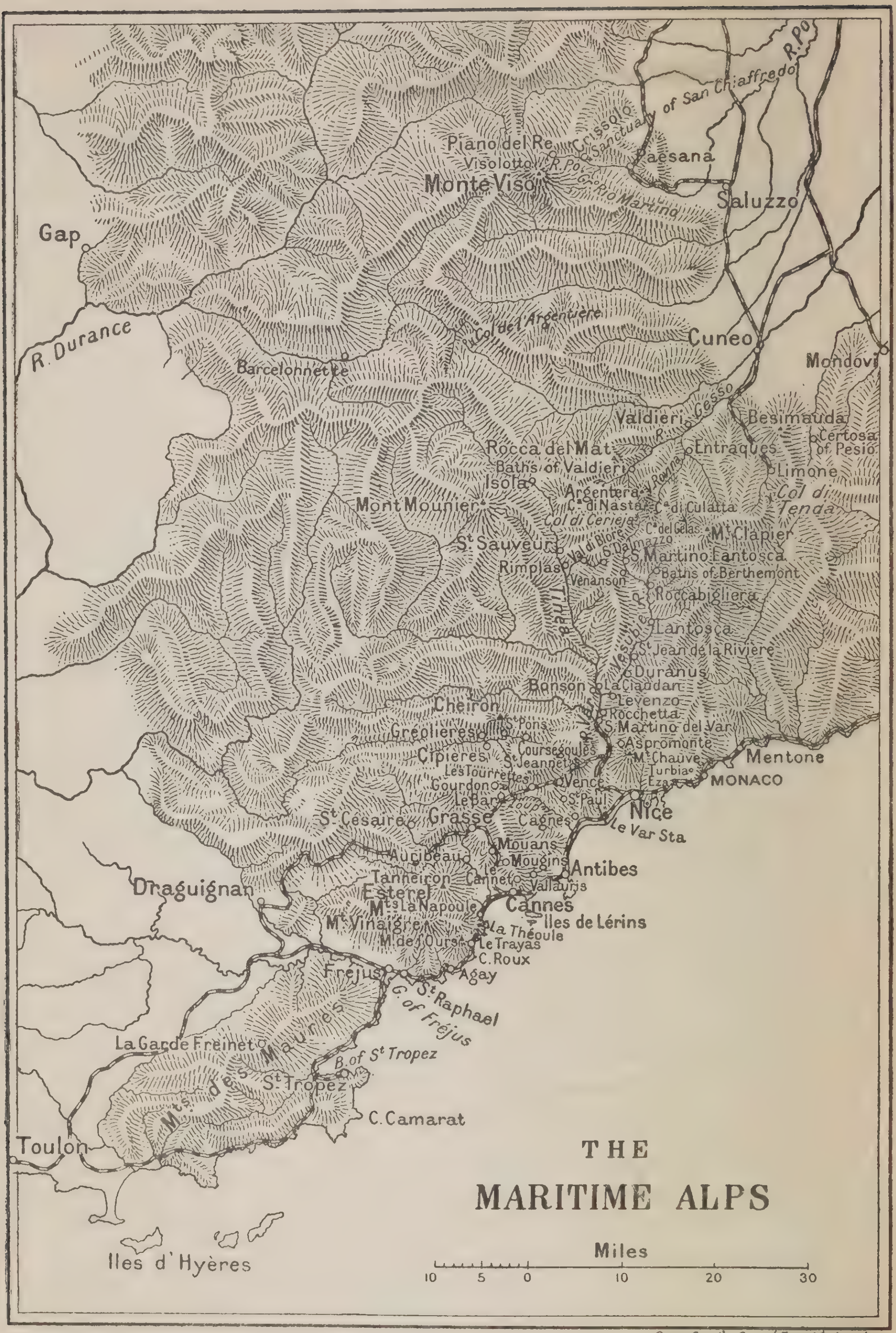
I

THE MARITIME ALPS

1. The Coast in Winter

THE author of *Aurora Leigh* has described in picturesque verse the strange sights which greet the traveller when day dawns on him as he speeds southwards in the night express from Paris to Marseilles. The green orchards, quiet homesteads, low rounded hills, and trim poplar-lined river-banks on which he closed his eyes have given place to grey gnarled olives and cactus hedges, white flat-roofed farms and brown age-stained cities, abrupt red ranges and stony plains, between which the Rhône rushes with southern impetuosity to the sea. The landscape might, at one moment, be in North Africa, at another in Syria ; it is no longer French, but Mediterranean.

Those who hurry on past Avignon and Arles to Nice or Mentone have before them a day of splendid surprises ; Marseilles, stately on her brilliant bay ; La Ciotat among its fantastic crags, like some seaport in a Pompeian fresco ; the broad fertile valley which leads to the Roman arches of Fréjus, and back again to the blue Midland Sea. There is still, however, something in store for any one whose eyes are not wearied with so much various beauty. As the train, suddenly leaving behind the red porphyry headlands and green glens of the Esterel, dashes past the castle of La Napoule, and across narcissus-strewn meadows through which a bright trout stream finds its way to the sea, the Maritime Alps burst for the first time into view. Whatever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St. Jeannet
M. Chauve
Mentone
Les Tourrettes
Turbia
Gourdon
Vence
Eza
MONACO
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THE
MARITIME ALPS

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the season, their heads shine silver against the eastern sky, soaring high above the village-crowned foot-hills, and contrasting vividly, both in form and colour, with the flat-topped tawny crest of the nearer heights which shelter Grasse.

Again, after the villas of Cannes have been left behind, our eyes are drawn up from the rose-hedges and wild-tulip beds which fringe Golfe Jouan to the great range of snow, reappearing, a sudden ghostly vision, above a low hill cloaked in ancient olive groves. The jagged mountain to the east is Mont Clapier; the comely pyramid on the left is the Cima dell' Argentera towering over the watershed. The crowd of sunshine-seekers pays little attention to the white fringe of the horizon. But the mountaineer recognises with delight a combination of sea and snow hardly to be seen again short of the far easternmost bay of the Black Sea, where the voyager issuing from Batum has on his right hand

Καύκασον αἰπήεντα Κυταίδα τε πόλιν Αἴης.

Cannes itself is only too well known to English readers. It would be difficult to say anything new in praise or dispraise of the southern Torquay which has overgrown the quiet fishing village of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is a place of violent contrasts. We remember it most by its life-giving, serene air, its exquisite land and sea, its rose, violet, and cassia gardens. But on the spot one cannot always close one's eyes to conspicuous drawbacks—architectural horrors in the shape of barracks for invalids, cockney-gothic castles, or box-like French villas.

The visitor who prefers nature to society, or even golf, will soon turn to the country near at hand. Immediately behind the town steep roads mount between villa gardens, where the roses cover every trellis, and are not content until they have climbed high into the cypress-spires, to fall back again earthwards in spring in a cascade of white blossoms. Above the villas spreads the fir forest with its odorous thorny undergrowth, where the naturalist may hope to capture a green frog in a pool, to come upon a company of poisonous caterpillars on one of their head-to-tail journeys, or, if sharp-sighted enough, to discover and dig out the exquisitely contrived nest of a trap-door spider. Soon we come to the terrace path beside a watercourse which winds round the hills to the chapel of Notre-Dame de Vie. For miles and miles our eyes look out over swells and falls of waving olives and red terraced hills—a spacious, stately landscape. Close at hand Le Cannet, where Rachel died, ranges crescent-wise in its sheltered hollow; Mougins clusters on its airy hilltop; Grasse catches the sunlight on its high terrace; while, opposite, the curving capes and peaks of the Esterel hem in the bright waters. If we cross over a spur, we shall come down upon the little basin of Vallauris, which supplies the clay for a ware which imitates and recalls the soft grey and blue colours of a southern sea on a day of wind and cloud.

No view on the whole coast surpasses—one only, so far as I know, rivals—the noble prospect from the lighthouse of Antibes. Beyond the smooth sheen of the Bay of Nice the land rises in three tiers of stately hills. The lowest is half hid in a grey cloud of olive woods, jewelled here and there with bright towns set on the edge of the waves, or perched high on the hilltops and showing against the rich browns of the middle range which shelters Grasse and Nice from the northern blasts. Above its bare tawny slopes the snows of the Maritime Alps glow upon the horizon.

As we rest against the roots of the olives a brown figure, with a wallet and a violin, climbs up the paved chapel-lined track from the town. As he comes nearer I recognise in the old man with a musician's face the friar of the chapel hastening to play a vesper hymn on an organ framed with his own hands out of the great reeds of the country, and set up in the choir under votive tablets which tell how many mariners have escaped perils by sea, from sudden squalls or English cruisers, through the grace of Our Lady of Antibes. Hence one may wander onwards, through cornfields and olive-yards, past tiny white cottages with red-tiled courts, each overhung by its lemon or pomegranate tree, down to the bay where the fishermen keep their boats, or the farthest cape where the purple, white-crested waves break to pieces on the low reefs of rock, and wicked Monaco, hidden from every other point of the French coast, peeps out like a witch beyond the cliffs of Eza and Turbia.

I must not attempt to catalogue or describe all the landscapes which memory recalls. There is scarcely a brow or dell within five miles of Cannes I have not rambled over, scarcely a peasant's olive-yard that I have not trespassed upon, and every one of these rambles has left behind it some new and brilliant picture to add to my gallery of recollections.

Little to be pitied is the Alpine climber whom fate compels for a season to haunt the Esterel. Their highest crag, it is true, only just surpasses 2000 feet; but the summits, which, seen from Cannes, rise in a long undulating line against the western horizon, if hills in height, are true mountains in character. On the first morning their outline seems perfectly beautiful; yet every day reveals fresh charms in its complicated simplicity. Three times above the bay of La Napoule the ridge rises and falls in graceful curves, then, after a wide sweep, springs up into a bold summit, broken as it sinks seaward by tall spires. This is the Cap Roux, a well-known landmark to mariners. Where the mountain is bare, the rocks are of red porphyry; where clothed, the covering is a dense growth of evergreens. Distance blends both into a purple bloom, which nothing but the fiercest mistral can destroy.

The plain of the Siagne, five miles of alluvial level, separates the last hotel of Cannes from the castle of La Napoule, at the foot of the Esterel. The early train will carry us swiftly across it, and, after traversing by a tunnel the headland of La Théoule, land us at Les Trayas, forty years ago a solitary house between the sea and the mountains. After exchanging a friendly greeting with the station-master, who leads a hermit-like existence, cheered by the occasional reversion of a Paris newspaper, the wanderer is free to choose between the four footpaths which diverge from the platform.

First let us ramble along the coastguards' path towards Cap Roux. No greater contrast can be imagined to the cliff-paths of our native coasts. Here there is no swell of surging, or moan of retreating tides, no boisterous breeze shifting ever from side to side and vexing the sad sea into grey, short, restless billows. The tideless main pours steadily its deep smooth swell into the echoing caves of the rocks. The waves are wine-colour in the shadow or above the dark seaweed beds, green in the pure sunshine ; round the ruddy crags which lie out among the waters they break into bright columns of foam. The path is half buried in a thicket of fragrant bushes which form a hedge along the cliff—laurels, myrtle, arbutus, thick-leaved cistus, lit up in April with a galaxy of white stars, tall heaths with wax-like blossoms, prickly thorns. Where a cottage once stood fruit trees are in blossom. The stiff boughs of a fig tree are already, in February, tipped with jewel-like buds, which in a few weeks will broaden out into glorious leaf. The dry warm air vibrates with sensible waves of sunshine and sweet aromatic scents. Beside us a trickling brook flows out of a steep narrow glen, where it is soon lost to sight between rocky bluffs and tall fir-stems. Such must have been the sky and sea :

That old-world morn in Sicily
When on the beach the Cyclops lay,
And Galatea from the bay
Mock'd her poor love-lorn giant's lay.

Lying along the turf and under the fragrant bushes, with the starry blossoms of the cistus dropping on one's face, it is difficult not to fancy the old world still young, the new world unborn. Even the huge bank thrown across the glen just where it becomes a bay is no stumbling-block. May it not be the Cyclops' doing—a barrier to prevent the union of the sea nymph and her lover. That sudden roar and shaking of the mountain beneath us represents the giant's groan.

But all day-dreams must have an end, and this one is cut short by the appearance of Polyphemus himself in the shape of the snorting engine of the Paris express, which, dashing over the high embankment, recalls us rudely to the twentieth century. Not altogether a bad century, however, since in twenty-four hours it brings shivering Britons out of their damp purgatory and enables them to enjoy for a space this healing paradise.

Beyond and westward of Cap Roux lies the quiet haven of Agay, until a few years ago a station without a hamlet, unless two or three scattered farms deserve the name. Land-locked on three sides by steep wooded hills, the sea touches the shore in a ripple which has the brightness of a smile and scarcely more motion. Two or three rude Mediterranean barks are moored off the shore. On the right rises a bold promontory crowned with a signal. Its steep sides are built up of ruddy rocks and fir-stems crowned with dark-green foliage, between which glows the deep blue Mediterranean, flecked by white dazzling seagulls and a few distant sails. The broad gulf of Fréjus spreads away to the distant lighthouse of Cap Camarat, embracing in its curve the headlands of the Montagnes des Maures and the shining bay of St. Tropez.

Turning my back on the sea, I followed one day the stream which filters through the sands of the beach, and found a broad valley stretching inland between the waste pine-plumed heights. The water is shaded by a thicket of oleanders and aged cork trees showing the red scars of many flayings. Presently some tilled ground, a few animals, and a solitary house met my eyes. I fancied myself on the point of discovering Circe's retreat, and felt almost uncomfortable when a real pig introduced himself.

Under the landward side of Cap Roux stands a milestone which marks the line of the old Massilian coast-road, utilised by the Romans, until they constructed at a more convenient point farther inland the Via Aurelia. A little farther is a spring draped with maidenhair and shaded by chestnuts, above which, in a hole in the rock, St. Honorat and many of his successors found an agreeable hermitage and some fugitives in the days of the Revolution a hiding-place.

Here we are on classic ground for mountaineers. In April, 1787, a few months before his successful ascent of Mont Blanc, De Saussure explored the Esterel. He has left us a detailed account of the hermitage as he saw it, and of his ascent of the porphyry crags above it. After describing the fountain, he goes on in words which mark the struggle raging at the moment between formal and natural gardencraft. " Les jardins ne font pas moins de plaisir, et quoique le goût moderne reprouve tout ce qui est régulier, cependant un peu d'art et de symmétrie fait un agréable contraste avec la brute et sauvage nature de ces montagnes ; et les allées droites de ces jardins, placées en étagères couvertes de berceaux de vignes et terminées par des niches creusées dans le rocher, firent sur moi l'impression la plus agréable." The garden in the wilderness and its keeper have long since disappeared, and those who seek to climb the Montagne du Cap Roux must find their own way.

De Saussure did his duty as a climber. He took the hermit with him, not as guide, for the idea either of climbing or even naming the hill never seems to have suggested itself to the holy man. Consequently they first made for the western point, the tower-like Raou (Rocher) Dauphinier (" Latte," De Saussure calls it). This rock looks formidable in the distance, but there is an easy though rough way to the top. But the crest between it and the Montagne du Cap Roux is broken by a huge inaccessible rock tower, the Grénier, and to get round this entails a plunge into a thorny thicket—" horribles broussailles " the savant calls them—and the modern climber will be tempted to use an at least equally strong adjective.

Seen from the western or Fréjus side, the range of the Esterel sweeps round in a semicircle from Cap Roux on the right to Mont Vinaigre on the left. A lower ridge runs across in a straight line, forming the string to the bow. Through this barrier the sources of the Agay stream have cut deep gorges. The northernmost escapes by a narrow gate between two tall cliffs supported by bold buttresses, long spines of rock weathered into the most fantastic shapes. The eastern stream flows out of a much longer defile. For a mile and a half it runs through a narrow and tortuous cleft, where the clear deep pools reflect spires and pinnacles of red porphyry, or tall firs rising out of a dense tangle of southern scrub. The upper end of the defile is guarded by two natural obelisks. Beneath them lies a tiny meadow, a solitary and romantic spot, hardly visited twice a winter from Cannes. The glen is known, according to the French Ordnance map, as the Vallon du Mal Infernal. A peasant belated among its weird crags may easily have fancied himself in enchanted ground. But have not the surveyors made a mistake? Etymology is dangerous ground for mapmakers when the local dialect is strange to them. Mail or Mal equals mountain in Provençal. An alp in the Maritime Alps is known as the Mal-invern, which would appear to be equivalent to the familiar Montenvers, "the pasture at the back."

The hills which hem in the glen are traversed in every direction by foresters' paths made at Government expense. We may find a short way back to Les Trayas by an easy and picturesque path, or traverse either flank of the Montagne de l'Ours, descending at last to the farm of Maurevielle, by terraces running amongst groves of firs, arbutus, and evergreen oaks and cork trees, whose trunks, of a deep wine-stain hue, repeat the colour of the rocky tusks which break the hillside. In some corners, which have escaped the ravages of the fires that from time to time devastate the forest, the trees attain great size. Everywhere there is the same odorous undergrowth, woven of tough thorns, myrtle, and cistus. In this winterless land December only adds a touch of brightness to the evergreen thickets by hanging the arbutus with scarlet berries, which mingle with the tiny cream-coloured blossoms, a symbol of the union of autumn and spring. As we return eastwards we face the broad-backed hills of Vallauris, from which the Cap d'Antibes stretches out like a green sickle into the sea. In the distance the ranges beyond the Var glow ruddy against the sun, and high in the sky soar the white summits of the Maritime Alps, the wall of Italy, the watchman on whose shining battlements looks across to Turin and Monte Rosa.

Unless a carriage picks us up at La Napoule, we must (to avoid the circuitous and dusty high road) cross the railroad bridge over the Siagne, and walk home through the narcissus meadows and the stone-pine grove, or along the sands, watching the sunset colours fade slowly from sky and sea until all is dark below, and the faint glow in the upper air is reflected only where a long bar of light marks the wet stretch of sand left by the last advance of the quiet waves.

Day after day one may wander among the seaward slopes and hidden glens of the Esterel without meeting a human being. The intense solitude is rarely broken even by the cry of an animal or a bird. Life seems to be concentrated in what we call inanimate forms of nature—the murmuring brooklet, the rough-limbed mountain, the dancing air, the laughing sea. All these become so vivid and palpable as separate existences that it is quite natural to fall back into a Greek frame of mind and to accept the fair old Greek embodiments.

But if half the Esterel is, except to a few old Cannes residents, an unknown desert, their highest summit, Mont Vinaigre, is a household, or rather a *table d'hôte*, word to visitors. It serves them as a frequent excuse for their favourite form of recreation, a gigantic picnic party, at which a dozen to twenty people talk, unpack, eat, pack, and talk again ; and the only thing forgotten is the scenery.

The mountaineer must not, however, abandon Mont Vinaigre because its solitudes are now and then rudely broken in upon. Besides the post road to Fréjus, which traverses one of the shoulders of the mountain within three-quarters of an hour's walk of the top, he may find plenty of picturesque by-paths to the signal which crowns the highest of a spine of bold porphyry crags. If he is an enthusiast for moonlight and sunrise, there is even a natural cave where he may pass a weird night in dreaming of the brigands or wild boars who used to haunt the neighbouring thickets.

From the top of the pass there is a most noble and delightful view over the coast country of Provence from Nice on its spacious bay to Draguignan on its high hillside. The mountain itself supplies as foreground a tangle of rocks and pines and cork trees, such a scene as Salvator Rosa sometimes indicates with a dull eye and rough brush, which miss all but surface effect. The charm of the panorama lies in the perfect definition of picturesque details and local colours in the white towns and hamlets, pine groves and meadows, high crags and olive-clad plains, sea-gulfs and vessels, all spread out over an immense field. The mysterious vague sublimity of a great mountain view is absent. In place of one overpowering effect, we enjoy a multitude of incidents perfectly combined into a harmonious whole.

The first time I stood on Mont Vinaigre I was witness to a very singular and suggestive vision. The morning had been bright, but as the day went on a grey pall, portending rain, had risen in the west and slowly stretched overhead, blotting out all the fair colours in land and sea, and blurring the delicate features of the wide landscape. But above the Var valley some counter air-current kept the clouds in check, and on the eastern horizon the snow peaks shone forth pure and brilliant against a background of pale blue sky, so that one might fancy them a row of great white-winged angels looking out from their untroubled heaven on the dark plains of earth.

There is a neighbouring height, the view from which rivals, perhaps surpasses, that from Mont Vinaigre. The Tanneiron is comparatively a tame hill. Clad below in steep pine-woods, it broadens out towards the top into wide, sunny spaces, where vines and fig trees flourish. On the highest crest stands a farm. A rough cart-track mounts from the bridge over the Siagne on the Fréjus road to the top, and a terrace path, commanding lovely views of Grasse and its gardens, follows the long back of the range to a pilgrimage church, whence it descends to the bridge above Auribeau, or by a shorter cut, which, unless the miller's punt is at hand, may involve wading the Siagne, to the village itself.

Below Auribeau, a hamlet clinging round the top of a steep hill, the river, here dammed up into a broad, tranquil stream, flows for half a mile through a picturesque dale. Steep banks clothed with firs and cork trees, and lit up in April with golden broom and white-starred cistus-bushes, hem in meadows and willow-fringed watercourses which might have been brought straight from the valley of the upper Thames.

When the Esterel have yielded up all their secrets, when we know all that lies between the walls of La Napoule and the stone pines and ruined arches of Fréjus, the scattered villas of the quiet French watering-place of St. Raphael and the beacon crag of Agay, it is time to turn northwards.

Behind Grasse, some fourteen miles from the coast, a long range rises abruptly in a continuous line, closing in the horizon of all views near Cannes. The slopes are only powdered with snow for a few days in winter ; but the highest crest is outlined with a thin white edge long after the sheltered sunward face is bare. The lower hills are grey with olive groves. The bare rounded tops take a fresh colour in winter with every change of light—now the pale amber of Egyptian ranges ; now, like Scotch hills, blue and grey under passing shadows.

In the centre, under the snowy crest just spoken of, the long uniform wall is broken to its base by a deep cleft. Two huge opposite cliffs throw their shadows, morning and evening, across at one another. This is the gorge of the Saut du Loup. The crest is the Cheiron (5813 feet), the highest summit in the block of mountains between the Var and the sea.

The road to the hills leads past Mougins, perched on its airy hilltop, through Mouans, where under the ancient olive stems the anemones burst forth in March like a troop of Dicky Doyle's fairies, of every hue and size from the modest purple star to the blazing scarlet sun-anemone, a firework of a flower. Then it mounts the long hillside to the town of Grasse between terraces which in April are a staircase carpeted with wild hyacinths and daffodils.

Grasse hangs on the steep slope looking out to the distant sea in a position resembling in some respects that of Broussa, while its steep narrow streets may recall Siena. The town has still an air worthy of the ancient Provençal republic, which was alternately the ally of Pisa and of Genoa, as the politics of its rulers swayed from Ghibelline to Guelf. It has a heavy twelfth-century cathedral, and a promenade once shaded by noble plane trees. Some barbarous official laid his axe to their roots. When last I saw them the noble old trunks were prostrate, and, sound to the core, gave the lie to the plausible bystander who suggested that they had been condemned as dangerous. I must add that he only added this excuse in consequence of the scorn with which I had received his previous suggestion that new trees would be prettier. Yet Grasse calls itself artistic, and holds fêtes in memory of the native painter Fragonard, famous for his decorative nymphs and goddesses.

Beyond the gate of Grasse the Vence road runs along a terrace high on the hillside ; bare rocks rise above ; below, swells of fir and olive, broken here and there by tall cypresses or a white village church, stretch away to the distant bay of La Napoule. After a low brow has been crossed the scene changes. Neighbouring hills cut off the views towards the sea, and the road enters the valley of the Loup. Sweeping round deep hollows in the hillsides, the haunt of primroses, it approaches Le Bar, a large village with an old church which contains a fifteenth-century altarpiece of the Tuscan school. From the terrace close at hand the gorge of the Loup is first seen. Two tremendous headlands of golden limestone front each other. The rocks fall in precipices of between 2000 and 3000 feet into the great chasm.[1] On a half-way shelf on the brink of the cliff stands Gourdon, a hamlet of refuge in the old times.

The high road leading to Vence descends rapidly amongst olives to the riverside, to mount again by a long ascent to Les Tourrettes. We leave it at the bridge, and follow a footpath which, stealing up on the right bank between orange gardens and violet beds, climbs to the very base of the wall of crags.

After creeping for some distance under the rocks, and crossing numerous gullies full of dripping maidenhair, the path comes back to the stream, where it is tightly grasped between huge precipices of red rock. A deserted mill is passed on the opposite bank. A little higher the track crosses the river. At this point picnic parties used to be stopped by a skeleton bridge. The stream roars below, and from rock to rock, a distance of perhaps ten or twelve feet, three poles extended, the faggots and earth which were once laid on them to form a pathway having long since fallen in. However, I found it an easy matter for any one not too proud to crawl to get across by the boughs.

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[1] The bridge of the high road is about 550 feet above sea-level ; the top of the lower cliffs 2860 and 3340 feet respectively. Recent maps indicate that the perilous track here described has been superseded by a road.

The few who venture over find themselves in the heart of as wild and romantic a chasm as can be met with in the Alps. Broken cliffs, only here and there giving scanty goat-pasture, spring straight from the waterside. A few chestnuts cling to the crags. So narrow is the cleft that a mere strip of sky is visible overhead, against which, looking back, the great rocks forming the portals of the gorge throw out their bold outlines. Deeper in the defile there is no more room for the path, which passes along a gallery carried round the face of a crag overhanging the stream. This gallery I found in much the same state as the bridge—that is to say, only a few withes remained, bound to iron stanchions in the rock. These, however, could be wormed over by a light weight. Beyond this *mauvais pas* a stream coming down from Gréolières, a hamlet 2000 feet overhead, tumbles in a great leap across the path. At last the track abandons the river, and a rude staircase in the limestone rock, which any one unaccustomed to mountains might very easily fail to notice, leads up some 300 feet to a brow whence all the height and depth of the abyss are seen at a glance. A path, easy except for those subject to giddiness, traverses the face of the cliffs, passing at one place under another waterfall.

The gorge is now left behind, and an upper valley, in winter bare and brown, opens before us. The few scattered cottages are connected by horse-tracks. A new road running to the village of Cipières runs high along the western hillside. It is useless to those making for the Cheiron, who must keep close to the water on its (true) left bank as far as the point where the valley of the Loup turns due west, and a road leads up a side glen to the right to the high plateau of Coursegoules. Following this for a hundred yards, and passing close to the hamlet of St. Pons, I began to climb the great face of the Cheiron, conspicuous from the hills near Cannes. The next two and a half hours were devoted to steady treadmill work up very steep grass slopes, broken only for a few minutes midway by a cultivated shelf. A little more than half-way up the ascent of 4000 feet I turned round for a moment to rest. A high snowy range, very clearly defined, with peaks shining in rosy light and pearly shadows in its hollows, had risen above the ridge behind me, itself 3500 feet high. I had to think twice before I could convince myself that no Maritime Alp could possibly have got so far to sea, and that these substantial snow-peaks were the same I had seen from lesser heights as semi-transparent ghosts floating in haze above the watery horizon, the mountains of Corsica.

Time was running short, and I could not afford to halt. At last I was up to the level of the base of the cliffs that form the crest of the Cheiron. To be able to use hands as well as feet was a delightful relief in the long uphill strain. I took the steepest rock I could find, and indulged my scrambling instinct. A short gully led up between two crags. As I reached the crest I was met by an icy blast which nearly knocked me back again. A few steps to the right and I was on the top of the Cheiron (5827 feet), under the lee of a big ruined signal, erected, no doubt, for trigonometrical purposes. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun was low in the western heavens. A wilder view I had never seen even from the greatest heights. The sky was already deepening to a red winter sunset. Clouds or mountains threw here and there dark shadows across earth and sea. The Esterel had sunk to a cape of the size of Beachy Head. Far beyond them stretched the coast of Provence. The Gulf of Fréjus was spread out with all its bays and promontories. Next I overlooked the Montagnes des Maures in whose recesses lies Fraxinetum, La Garde Freinet, the lair from which Saracen bandits used to issue forth to raid the mountains and harass pilgrims in the Alpine passes. There is nothing left now of their fortress save some rock cisterns cut out of a projecting crest of the hills, but the walk past it from St. Tropez across the chain to the Toulon railroad affords a very pleasant succession of Provençal landscapes. Further still the long land-line receded southwards towards Toulon, broken where the Îles d'Hyères lay apart from the mainland.

Far out at sea Corsica burst out of the dark waves like an island in flames, reflecting the sunset from all its snows. Seen from the coast only its mountain tops, and these by aid of refraction, overcome the curvature of the globe. From our height we seemed to see down to their roots, the capes which break the waters.

The back of the Cheiron itself is a broad pasturage, partly wooded, in summer covered with flocks and herds and vocal with shepherds' songs. Now it was a howling wilderness of snow and ice. That way lay winter. I had climbed the great screen which, like the mountain-wall of a fairy tale, protects the lemons and palms of Provence. In front was the country of the north wind. It was strange to turn one's eyes from the fertile coast studded with bright towns to the white leagues of frozen hills which stretched one beyond the other towards Gap and Grenoble. If the knife-edges of Dauphiné were in sight, they were indistinguishable from lesser snow-clad heights. The familiar peaks of the Maritime Alps still remained by far the most striking features of the mountain panorama.

It was not, however, a view in which one cared to linger over details or was eager for the recognition of localities. The overpowering effect of the vast weird landscape was due, not to any individual feature, but to its general expression. Placed in solitude under the influence of this lurid sunset on the high desolate hilltop between the snows and sea, the most matter-of-fact tourist could hardly think for long of such small things as hills and gulfs and cities. One felt brought face to face with a mighty struggle between the principalities and powers of nature, a strife in which night and winter were allied against day and summer and were on the point of gaining the mastery. As the sun sank in the west, the sea grew more and more grey; the flush died off the Corsican heights and left them wan ghosts on the edge of the world ; the last gleams faded from the warm green shores and the red promontories beyond Nice ; the icy blast from the leagues of northern frost and snow shrieked past with an even fiercer howl of triumph, as if about to seize on the last strip of sun-protected land underfoot. The dramatic force and mystery of such a scene are familiar to most climbers ; they can scarcely be conveyed to those who are strangers to mountains.

Having lingered as long as the swift approach of darkness would permit, I slid over the snow-slopes on the north side of the mountain to a gap a quarter of a mile east of that by which I had mounted. My further descent might best be summarised in an alliterative line familiar to youth. By a run down the rugged rocks I succeeded in reaching, with ragged clothes and knuckles, but otherwise unharmed, a good path just before dusk. It crossed a low spur, and then circled round bare slopes to the large mountain village of Coursegoules, where I arrived in pitch darkness.

The village inn gave me a partridge for supper and a comfortable bed. Before daybreak next morning I set off by moonlight to return to the sea coast. The road lay at first across wild, silent downs, alive in summer with shepherds and shepherds' songs. Often, I was told, they sit on neighbouring hillocks and chant alternate strains to the music of their pipes. Presently, as the east whitened, and the moon paled in the western sky, I saw from the outmost folds of the hills the wide sea-spaces, and dropped by steep zigzags down a barren gorge, and past an old castle of the Templars to the ancient town of Vence, the orange-girt walls of St. Paul, and the station of Cagnes.

There is another gorge in these hills which well deserves a visit. The water which supplies Cannes is brought in an open aqueduct, over twenty miles in length, from the Siagne near St. Césaire. This village lies some ten miles west from Grasse on the first shelf of the hills. It is approached by a road across a bare plain so thoroughly Syrian in character that one finds oneself involuntarily looking out for camels and a domed Moslem tomb. You may enter and walk about the streets without further discovery, unless chance leads you to a terrace a few yards behind the church. Then you find that the whole village is built on the brink of a great chasm. Far below (1500 feet, I should say at a rough guess) the clear stream of the Siagne, newly born out of great caves in the hills two or three miles higher up, flows at the bottom of a steep-sided glen, cultivated wherever the cliffs allow it. The olive groves pour down to the bottom in a great silver-green cascade.

The aqueduct which feeds Cannes draws its supply from the stream a mile or two higher up. By a little scrambling it is possible to follow it in the opposite direction, looking down on the still green pools, the sparkling shallows, and high arched bridges of the Siagne, and the clusters of sun-stained buildings—mills or farm-houses—which gather beside the water. The high road from Grasse to Draguignan is joined close to the wide-spanned arch which marks the frontier of the Alpes Maritimes and the Var departments.

2. The Seaward Valleys

Day by day, in the clear winter sunshine, I had watched from the hills round Cannes the snowy chain. The sojourners by the sea give it a glance now and then, and know it all as the " Col di Tenda." But to penetrate into its recesses and learn its secrets no more occurs to them than a visit to Chamonix did to English travellers at Geneva before the middle of the eighteenth century. Even if sound in lungs and limb, they have, however, good excuse for their indifference. For it is not until mid-May, when the sun-fearing English have flown homewards, that spring reaches the Alpine valleys. It is one thing to go in search of " the Alps in winter " when your home is in a wet fog ; another, when you are basking on the warm shores of Provence. I at least had no sufficient enthusiasm.

But the months slipped past, and I was still at Cannes. A change had come over the spirit of the landscape ; the brown hill-terraces were brown no longer, but bright with young green corn, which gave a new tone to the olive groves.

There was less delicate and strange colour in the atmosphere; but, in exchange, an infinite variety of blossom and verdure in every field and copse. An exquisite cloak of young leafage had fallen across the plain of the Siagne; among the crags of the Esterel the heaths and cistuses were in full bloom; even between the stones of their pathways tall asphodels were springing up. April—the May of the north—had come upon us.

In the Pyrenees I had once reached in April the Vignemale, a peak of 11,000 feet. There seemed every reason to hope that a visit to the snowy chain would be rewarded by equal success, and a glimpse of the well-loved lands and heights which lay beyond it, Italy and Monte Rosa. At any rate, an excursion to San Martino Lantosca would show me two of the principal valleys of the Maritime Alps—those of the Vésubia and Tinéa—and enable me, I hoped, to identify the three principal peaks seen from the coast.

The Vésubia joins the Var some fifteen miles from the sea. But no wheel-track penetrates its last gorge. The high road from Nice to San Martino Lantosca follows a narrow glen for some miles, until near the high village of Levenzo it crosses a shoulder of the hills, and finds a way down into the Vésubia valley. I preferred a path of my own finding which promised wider landscapes.

Heavy rain had fallen for the previous twenty-four hours; but the morning of the 6th of April was cloudless. Land and sea swam in quivering sunshine. The country was in its fullest spring outburst. The rose-hedges were throwing out their thousands of pink and white many-petalled blossoms. The quaint fringed blooms of the mesembryanthemum—spots of pale yellow or deep pink, such as Mantegna scatters over his bowers—clung in festoons to the roadside walls. The last purple and scarlet anemones were making way for the first poppies and gladioli among the growing wheat. Here and there a crumpled little brown leaf on the low dusty vine stems showed that the warm sun was stirring their juices. The stiff crooked branches of the fig trees, which had stood for four months bare and gaunt, were now each tipped by an emerald bud; one or two of the topmost buds were already unfurling into broad leaves. Through the tangle of young growths and flowers the Mediterranean shone, a vast breadth of blue, varied with vivid rainbow hues where the Var, swollen by recent storms, poured its earth-laden flood into the waves. Above the sea horizon the Corsican mountains rose out of the waters, which by hiding their base, give the snowy crests a strange and ghostly beauty.

My road led through the orange and olive gardens of the Nice basin, and then climbed the western spurs of Mont Chauve. Along these it continued in a high terrace, from which the eye ranged over the backs of the hills to the Îles de Lérins and the Esterel. The most prominent feature in the wide and noble prospect was the rock of St Jeannet, a huge red buttress of the range which stretches from the Var to the Siagne. The good road ended at Aspromonte, a cluster of houses packed together on a mountain spur, high out of all danger from plundering pirates or Saracens. From this point I trusted to find my way by some foot-track to Levenzo.

Among the branching paths above the village, I stopped a peasant to ask the way. I expected some sort of answer in the Provençal dialect. To my delight, the reply came in good Italian. When I used a few words of the southern tongue, the man's face brightened, and he offered at once to turn back, and put me in the right path. Such an act of simple courtesy is taken as a matter of course among Italian hills. In southern France it is rare.

The Provençal peasant has a character of his own. He is very estimable, but far from amiable. He seems to a stranger above all things suspicious, argumentative, tenacious of his rights; hence by no means inclined to allow trespassers on his little domain. Since every vineyard has its pathway, and there are no gates or stiles to distinguish public from private paths, this tenacity naturally often has a chance of exhibiting itself. Near Cannes one is not surprised that trespassers should become tiresome, particularly when they appropriate the sweet crop of the violet-beds. But I have frequently been turned back near remote country villages, where a foreigner is not seen once a year. I have had, while walking along the high road with a handful of wild anemones, to submit to a violent harangue on the invasion of the rights of market-women involved in my self-plucked nosegay. It does not add to the pleasantness of the Provençal that his dialect is unintelligible to strangers, and that he takes advantage of his separate speech to evade as far as possible—unless intelligence seems to his own advantage, in which case he brightens up wonderfully—questions addressed to him in French.

Beyond Aspromonte I followed a rough track, keeping close to the crest of the hills overlooking the Var, until a mile or two short of Levenzo it fell into the main road from Nice. The village itself occupies a hilltop to the left of the saddle from which the road descends into the gorge of the Vésubia. From a neighbouring brow the eye looks down over a broad cultivated basin to Rocchetta di San Martino, perched fortress-like on a crag beside the Var. Beyond the river lies, in most picturesque confusion, a tumbled mass of woody conical hills, with villages planted high on their slopes or brows.

I spent the afternoon and night at a decent wayside inn, and in the first sharp freshness of the morning pursued my journey to the snows. A few hundred yards beyond the house the road crosses a saddle, and the Vésubia comes into sight flowing at the bottom of a bare brown gorge. The road turns sharply to the right and descends along artificial terraces cut in the face of a steep ruinous hillside, deeply furrowed by water action. After heavy rains it must be exposed to dangerous earth-falls. The landscape was at first arid. Soon, however, a white village, embowered in olives, came into sight on the opposite hill. At an angle, where the road bent back into a deep recess and began to ascend, the scenery became romantic. Cypresses mingled with the olives, and ancient chestnuts spread their bare arms against the sky, while the ground between their roots was coloured by a quiet carpet of violets and primroses.

From this point the road winds upwards to the picturesquely scattered houses of Duranus. Beyond them it passes along the face of a sheer precipice. A stone thrown from the parapet would fall into the Vésubia 1200 feet below. This terrible cliff—one of the most abrupt on any Alpine road—is known as "Le Saut des Français." In the spring of 1800, before Marengo, the Austrian general Melas drove Suchet and the armies of the Republic in headlong rout from the passes of the Maritime Alps and across the Var. Coming over the hills from the Col di Tenda, the Austrians here fell upon a French detachment, and many of the defeated soldiery were driven over the precipice. Such is the account given by a local tradition and embodied in the name.

Beyond "Le Saut des Français" the road for some miles slowly descends to rejoin the river The predominance of the olive still gives a southern character to the scenery, and the flora is rather Mediterranean than Alpine, though rocks tower boldly overhead, and a sharp snow-peak, or the rugged comb of Mont Clapier, alternately closes the valley. La Riviera, a group of houses with a church, comes in as a most effective addition to the landscape. Beyond it road and river, now close companions, force the passage of a narrow defile where the first tints of spring were showing on the branches, and the underwood was already green.

The form of the basin below Lantosca suggests an ancient lake-bed. The barrier of rock which closes its upper end exhibits a very curious specimen of water action; the Vésubia has worn through it a deep narrow cleft, which has been enlarged artificially to enable the road also to profit by it. The old village of Lantosca lies on the top of a bluff.

For the next few miles the valley is wide and open, and, although the snows of Mont Clapier are in sight, tame compared to the lower gorges. In summer the scenery is doubtless rich and smiling: now, the fruit-trees, forerunners of the spring, sprinkled their fair blossom upon the face of a landscape as bare and brown as that of Piero della Francesca's "Nativity" in the National Gallery. A few olives still gave sober variety to the slopes, hardily maintaining their ground where pines would have been more in keeping with the rocks and snow.

Between Roccabigliera and San Martino di Lantosca, some six miles, the valley rises steeply, and is too narrow to admit of cultivation. The baths of Berthemont, a summer resort, lie some hundred feet above the road on the right, in the opening of a side glen. On the opposite sunless mountain side, a pine forest climbed up into the snow. Venanson, " the hunters' meet," is the name of the high-perched hamlet which looks down on the last bend of the valley.

Amongst gaunt chestnut trunks and brown meadows, sprinkled with thousands of pale stunted crocuses, and set in a frame of pine-woods, dark against the winter snows, San Martino, the Courmayeur of the Maritime Alps, came suddenly into sight. The little town, a mass of richly coloured stone walls and roofs capped by two church towers, stands on a promontory between two brawling Alpine torrents. I call it town, for the first thing that strikes the traveller is, that San Martino was a walled place. Who were the enemies who forced every dweller in the Maritime Alps to live as in a fortress, like an Ossete chief in the Caucasus, or a modern Syrian peasant on the confines of the desert? On the coast it is easy to picture the sudden descent of pirates, and the flight of the scared villagers to their hilltop. But what inducement can have led marauders to penetrate these mountain fastnesses? The Saracens, we are told, infested at one time all the western passes, and made the journey to Rome a real " Pilgrim's Progress " so far as danger was concerned; but any precise information as to the doings of the invaders in this part of the range is difficult to find. It is true that the Maritime Alps were from early times the scene of desperate fighting, whenever the French attempted to penetrate into Italy. But a mountain hamlet can hardly have found it worth while to fortify itself against passing armies.

At San Martino, as in more famous towns, the ancient walls are giving way before modern needs. The place aspires to become a sort of " succursale " to Nice as a summer resort. " Chalets " (in the Parisian, not the Swiss sense) spot the fields about the village. A public promenade has been constructed as a termination to the new road. There are inns, which throughout the summer months offer moderate comforts at fair prices

The road winds outside the old walls to a little piazza at the upper end of the village. The old High Street, a narrow lane impassable for carriages, stubbornly refuses to be modernised further than by the admission of an " English pharmacy," and a telegraph office.

The highest peaks of the neighbouring range are not visible from the village, and the landscape makes no pretence to grandeur. But it is perfectly Alpine, and in summer the abundance of water, the pines, and the flowery meadows must be very welcome to visitors from the sun-scorched coast.

The local guide was soon found. As a matter of course he pronounced all ascents impracticable, owing to the amount of snow on the mountains. According to my habit in such cases, I refrained from argument, and contented myself with intimating my desire to test practically how high it was possible to go with safety.

A cloudless morning encouraged my start for the snows. Half an hour above San Martino the valley bends abruptly to the east, and the Italian frontier is crossed. The boundary line is here most erratic ; the heads of several glens on the Nice side of the chain having been retained by Italy, to protect the king's chamois preserves round Valdieri from poachers. A sudden ascent beside a pretty waterfall leads to some chalets. Near these we left the track to the Passo di Cerieja, the frequented pass to Piedmont, and mounted a steep path which led into an upland basin, at the foot of a rugged granite crest, very conspicuous from the valley. Before we left the pines we had come to the snow ; fortunately it was crisp and hard. Long slopes led up to a higher basin, where the only colour was in the lichen-tinted granite crags, which shone golden in the pure morning sunshine.

Our peak rose precipitously to the left of the gap at the head of the glen. Climbing steep snow-slopes, here and there broken by rocks, we drew near at last to the ridge of the Alps, the white sky-line which all through the winter had girded my horizon. Looking back, I saw all the familiar foregrounds below me ; the low curving headland of Antibes, the mounds of the Esterel, the wide bay of St. Tropez, the southern cape of France, the grey sea plain, over which the wind was driving white cloud-flocks. In front, a hard black rock rose in our faces.

As we scrambled upwards, an object of jewel-like brightness shone over the rock and on the edge of the sky. In another moment a glittering line fringed the new horizon. There was no mistake as to the nature of those clearly defined indentures on the distant heaven. Monte Rosa was in advance, backed by all her court ; the stately Dent Blanche draped in spotless white ; the Matterhorn, black and rough Then came a crowd of lesser peaks of Arolla ; and, closing the procession, the noble bulk of the Grand Combin, with the Vélan in waiting on him.

One more step and the wide sudden prospect was complete. At our feet lay the mountain hamlet of Entraques. A short space farther, Cuneo, with its river and churches and bridges and railway train, was seen like a toy town ; and beyond it, stretching away to the base of the Pennine Alps, the broad plains of Piedmont shone in the morning sunshine.

My guide was disposed to leave unclimbed the few feet between us and the top, but when he saw I meant to go on he made no difficulty. A steep but safe ridge led us to the wave of snow which formed the summit. In one sense the panorama was to a climber not altogether satisfactory. We were surrounded by half a dozen loftier summits. Towards the Cima del Gelas the view was clear. But to the north rose the bulky Rocca dell' Argentera, the monarch of the Maritime Alps, with two satellites, the Cima di Nasta and Cima di Culatta, both exceeding us in height. These peaks all belong to a great northern spur. On the main chain where that spur joined it, and between us and the Passo di Cerieja, rose another peak, also surpassing us by a few feet, the Cima Balma dei Ghilié of the Piedmontese map.

There are two ways from San Martino to the Tinéa valley : I chose the shortest. The hillside south of the crest of our little pass was covered with larches. The ground beneath them was still white with snow, but on the branches yellow buds were already swelling. As the morning sun streamed on them, the outline of each tree shone as if tipped with ghostly flame.

From the pass there is no distant view. Below, in the centre of a bare basin, lies the hamlet of San Dalmazzo. On nearer approach it is seen to have been once walled; at least, the houses had been so disposed that their outer walls form a continuous rampart. An arched gateway protected each entrance. The church bears signs of high antiquity and has a well-proportioned porch and campanile. There was originally a crypt and a triple apse. The red colour of the slates used gives a pleasant warm tone to the otherwise shapeless buildings. The village, like many others in this part of the Alps, is badly supplied with water, depending on one spring, which is considered unwholesome by strangers, owing only, so far as I could make out, to its extreme coldness.

The path descends slowly to the villages of Valdiblore, which lie in a more sheltered and fertile situation. Chestnuts now appeared, and steep banks yellow with primroses led down to a torrent. We followed a mule-path along the slopes in order to reach St. Sauveur, which lies some miles above the junction of the torrent of Valdiblore and the Tinéa. The vines here were planted in trenches and protected from winter frost, a novelty to me in Alpine agriculture. Presently we came to Rimplas, a hamlet perched on a steep-sided brow jutting out between the two valleys. The Tinéa flows at least 2000 feet below in a deep gorge. Beyond it the hills rise steeply towards the broad-shouldered Mont Mounier; their lower spurs are worn away by water, and broken into deep glens and hollows. Some of the villages occupy the most extraordinary situations. A house on the opposite hill overhung a precipice of 1200 feet. Any children who live there must be kept hobbled, or they could scarcely survive infancy. Another considerable hamlet, higher up in the hills, was glued like a swallow's nest against a rocky slope, which, seen from opposite, looked wall-like.

The nature of the hillsides makes the access from Rimplas to the lower valley difficult. In the precipitous clay slopes water-action has wrought, and is constantly enlarging, a deep bay. No nervous person would care to ride along the path which circles round it. This spot had been some time before the scene of an absurd incident. A new préfet of Nice made up his mind to visit his subjects in the mountains. Finding that he was to pass their way, the municipality of Rimplas—if this is the title by which the fathers of the hamlet are properly designated—determined to do him every honour. They assembled at the entrance of the village, and, as the préfet's cavalcade drew near, greeted it with a "feu de joie" from all the available firearms in the place. Unfortunately, the préfet was at the moment at the narrowest point of the path, where it is a mere groove on the face of a crumbling precipice. Unfortunately, also, the spirited mule he rode was unprepared for such an explosion. Its rider, therefore, suddenly found himself imitating, much against his will, the attitude of Napoleon crossing the Alps, as represented in the most authentic engravings. The préfet, feeling unequal to such rivalry, rapidly slipped off on the inside, and made his entry on foot, to the dismay of the assembled villagers, whose hopes of governmental favour were thus suddenly brought down to zero.

Deeper and deeper we descended, till at last we were on a level with the town of St. Sauveur, a poor collection of drinking shops and hovels beside the muddy torrent, which is here hemmed in by steep hills.

I had a long drive of 36 kilomètres down the valley to S. Martino del Var before me. My driver had been the conductor of the post-cart, and consequently had a large acquaintance along the road. Indeed he was the most socially disposed person I ever met with. His conversations with every passer-by began with a shout delivered 300 yards before we met, and ended in another sent back to a like distance after we had passed. Between times my ears would have been glad of some repose, but our animal called for incessant exhortations. It stopped not only at every public-house, but at corners whence paths turned off to a wine-shop in the distance. My driver plausibly explained that the horse had belonged for some time to the collector of "contributions indirectes" and could not shake off the idea that he was out tax-gathering.

From the depth and narrowness of its channel the scenery of the Tinéa might be expected to claim a high place among Alpine gorges. But owing to the extremely friable character of the soil the hillsides want character, and the vegetation, compared to the southern gorges of the Lombard Alps, is sparse. The defile, however, in which the Var and Tinéa meet is equal in savageness to the gorge of Göschenen. For the next two or three miles the scenery is extremely romantic. On the right, a noble wood of stone-pines clothes the brow on which stands the hamlet of Bonson, and the road passes through groves of chestnut, which shelter the houses of La Ciaudan.

A little farther the road reaches a modern suburb of S. Martino del Var—untidy houses scattered round a village green. The old village still clings to its safe but inconvenient rock of refuge. I had intended to sleep here, and walk round next day by the hill road through St. Jeannet, a village formerly famous for its witches, but now only remarkable from the great red rock-castle, a buttress of the hills of Coursegoules, which towers above it, and is a landmark from Nice to Cannes. But the inn at S. Martino looked insufferably dirty, and the weather had broken. No vehicle could be obtained, but I had yet time to walk thirteen miles in the gloaming to the station of Le Var, where I could count on the late "gamblers' train" to take me back to the luxuries of Cannes.

The road was flat and straight, the night soon fell, and with the darkness came heavy rain. When the endurance, however, is not too prolonged, and there is a certainty of comfort at the end, there is some pleasure in despising darkness and damp.

My half-hour of waiting at the dreary little station was enlivened by a "screaming farce." An old farmer of Vence played the leading character, ably supported by the whole strength of the P.L. and M. Company; that is to say, by the station-master and two porters. The farmer had gone to sleep and been carried past his station, and was now called on to pay his fare back to it, some six sous, before returning. In vain the Parisian station-master appealed to rules, showered illustrations—supposing one took a ticket from Paris to Fontainebleau and went on to Marseilles, could one expect to make the journey there and back for nothing? The old fellow triumphantly retorted he had never been to, or come from, either place; and stamping his stick on the floor demanded confirmation from the bystanders in the broadest Provençal. The station-master prayed him at least to talk French. Temper was lost on both sides. The porters looked threatening, and a gendarme was spoken of. Suddenly there was a scream and a roar. While every one was engaged in hot argument the train had arrived. The station-master lost his head, and called everything and everybody sacred; the porters flung open doors; the public rushed in a general "sauve qui peut" into the utter darkness of the platform. We are off! Not yet; the train pulls up short, and the old fellow is bundled into the last carriage by the two porters. I saw him once more on the platform at Antibes, having been a second time taken past his station.

As the train slowly carried me homewards, I endeavoured to pass the time by turning over in my mind what I had seen during the previous days. I set myself to frame an independent opinion on a topic much discussed, the relative charm of the Alps in winter and summer.

I felt I had just added to my previous experiences fresh material for a judgement. For in early spring the high valleys are still wintry. But for a crowd of crocus blossoms scattered over the brown earth, and a golden tinge on the larch branches, I had observed no signs of returning life, and could easily have fancied myself in midwinter, as I had seen it before in other parts of the Alpine chain.

I do not despise the peculiar attractions of the wintry half of the year. Then the region of silent sublimity is extended so as to include the lower hills and passes. The muddy Swiss torrents are converted into clear streams. Wherever water trickles in summer, the frost fairies play their fantastic pranks. Every cascade is turned into a shining obelisk, every dripping crag is draped with bold ice-fringes, even the branches of the pines and the bushes along the roadside are tricked out in strange liveries. Winter has other charms which painters best appreciate. When the south wind rages the dry snow on the highest peaks blows off them in clouds which lit by the morning sun encircle their brows with golden halos. The low sun and the morning mists give colour and tone to mountain slopes which in the glare and glitter of an unclouded August look harsh and dull. The blue sky keeps all day long a quivering mottled softness, as in a reflection. The pine-clad hollows are steeped in strange impalpable colours, and even the dullest crags succeed in having their gem-like moments. There is no longer the painful sense of a complete absence of atmosphere, dwarfing mighty mountains to mere rocks, which we have all of us felt from time to time in the Alps in August.

But is all this compensation for the beauties that are lost? As usual, there is a good deal to be said on the other side.

The summer sun is a necessary test of true greatness. In winter every range of 6000 to 8000 feet apes the eternal snows. Mountains which carry their ermine through August we recognise as true sovereigns. But snow spread far and wide loses its divinity. It ceases to be mysterious, and becomes commonplace. In winter the foreground, wherever the earth can still be seen, is made up chiefly of parched grass, bare branches, and dusky stumps. The pine forest alone remains the same; and even this is changed, for the violent opposition of the dazzling snows turns it into a black shadow. In early summer the Alpine meadows, a few weeks before a patchwork of brown and white, like an immense drying ground, are covered ankle-deep in flowers—forget-me-nots, large daisies, purple orchids—which grow so thickly that the green blades of grass scarcely show between their blossoms. The glaciers look down through the budding branches of the chestnuts or the brown unfolding leaves of the walnut on fields where the maize is already high and the vine tendrils are leaping lightly from branch to branch. The snows no longer shine one white bank above another, but as a silver line over ranges chequered with blue and pink clouds of the great gentian and the Alpine rhododendron. The sense of fitness, which enjoys "everything in its proper place," and all things at their best, is satisfied. Even the everlasting snows are recognised as no abode of desolation. In the lowlands snow is at best a sheet drawn over nature's sleep. But in its summer home it is an agent of life. Tennyson was less happy than usual when he linked Death with the Silver Horns. The really dead mountains are not the streaming Alps, but those of the farther south, which stand gaunt and parched, with no shining robe to hide their hollow ribs, no gifts to offer the valleys at their feet.

For myself, I confess to having made another season my favourite. I am ready to maintain against all comers the claim of the Alps in October. How many of us who think we know the Alps have seen the Italian valleys, or the slopes above Sallanches, in their full autumn splendour? If there is any one in the Alpine Club who has not been at the Riffel when every rock glitters with new-fallen snow, and the pastures exchange the crude green of midsummer for a rich harmonious brown hue, when the larches are so many golden spires amongst the evergreen pines, and the bilberry bushes make a red carpet at their feet, when in the sharp chill of sunset every peak down to the little Riffelhorn creates a cloud phantom of itself which, after a hundred fantastic changes, melts away, as suddenly as it was born, into the starlit night—that man has yet to see Zermatt at its best.

I should be glad to persuade one or two of my countrymen to remain to enjoy the glories which Nature seems to keep back till the last tourist has gone home to the pale damp skies of his native Germany or England.[1]

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[1] The place-names in the district east of the Var have since its annexation been modified in French Government maps. San Martino Lantosca is designated St. Martin Vésubie.

3. The Northern Glens

Mountain-tops create a desire to climb them in many young and adventurous breasts. There are some who are assailed by an equally strong desire to penetrate the Beyond, to reach the invisible country behind the horizon. My many walks on the Riviera had shown me that the boldest peaks of the Maritime Alps stood out on their northern spurs. I longed both to climb one or two of them and to explore the glens at their base. In the autumn of the year succeeding that of the walk last described I visited Piedmont with that object, in company with my old guide François Dévouassoud.

In fair weather the railroad journey from Turin to Cuneo, under the shadow of the great range, is one of the most delightful in Europe. The rich vineyards and campanili of the plain form a shifting foreground, while against the sky towers, solitary and sublime, the noble pyramid of Monte Viso, fulfilling beyond all other Alpine peaks our childhood's ideal of a mountain. It was not without reason that Virgil and Chaucer named it alone of Alpine peaks. When the evening vapours gather and girdle its shoulders, leaving the majestic summit still clear, the most matter-of-fact mountaineer can hardly gaze without awe at so marvellous an apparition, and the idea of scaling such a pillar of the heavens may seem for a moment, even to him, a presumptuous dream. But, for the time, we pass by without making our pilgrimage to that great miracle-worker San Chiaffredo, and allow our train, slowly drawing near the centre of the great bay in the hills which opens out before us, to carry us on to the station of Cuneo.

The town is placed on a flat, steep-sided brow above the junction of two streams. Separated by five miles of level ground from the base of the Alps, its buildings gain no picturesque advantage from the accidents of the ground. There is no upper town, as at Bergamo or Biella, to climb to for a wider view over the plain. A straight High Street runs from end to end, lined with deep arcades resting on mediæval columns, some of which have finely carved capitals. It is connected on either side by short lanes with shady terraces, formerly ramparts, which command a wide outlook over Alps or Apennines.

It is the juxtaposition and contrast of these two famous ranges that gives its character to Cuneo. The mountains seen from the southern rampart are chestnut-clad, smooth-browed Apennines. Turn round, and true Alps are before us—Monte Viso pierces the sky; while behind it, distant but still imposing, shine the snowy masses of the Grand Paradis and Monte Rosa. The three peaks, bold tawny rocks, which look down the central street, are thoroughly Alpine. One of them is the highest of the Maritime Alps, the Punta dell' Argentera; its companions are the Cima di Culatta and Cima di Nasta.

Apart from its mountains and its picturesque High Street, Cuneo is not remarkable, unless for the profusion of its markets. Nowhere have I admired a more magnificent display of fruit and vegetables, and the dinner set before me and my fellow-guests at the Barra di Ferro, an excellent inn, bore striking witness to the abundance of the land.

But in my outward journey I saw nothing of the beauties of the Piedmontese plain, or of Cuneo. Driven out of Dauphiné by a snowstorm on September 25, I found Turin dark and chilly. The plain looked autumnal, damp, and wretched. I seemed to have fallen under an evil dream. Italy, it appeared, had gone north. Chestnuts and campanili were involved in a grey pall of seething Scotch mist. The sky and landscape were utterly incongruous.

François Dévouassoud and I arrived shivering under plaids at the village of Valdieri. We had intended to walk on to the Baths, some ten miles higher up the glen of the Gesso. But when we got to the junction of the roads, the weather looked so hopeless that we hesitated to push on into the mountains. We were content to reach Entraques before the clouds burst on us. The inn, at the farther end of the long straggling village, was most unpromising externally, but provided a clean bed and splendid trout.

The roar of many waterspouts had lulled me to sleep, and the same sound greeted my ears on awaking. After breakfast, however, the clouds suddenly broke, and in half an hour every vapour had passed from the sky, and the surrounding ranges stood out sheeted deeply in new snow, which touched the upper limit of the chestnut forests. I could not help wishing that I had with me some of my scholastic friends who find it difficult to account for Hannibal's adventures with snow in mid-October. To judge from the literature of the subject few of the commentators on the famous march of the Carthaginian army have realised the vagaries and frequently premature rigours of autumn in the Western Alps.[1]

We employed the day by mounting the Val della Rovina to a mountain tarn which lies near its head, whence we crossed by one of Victor Emmanuel's hunting-paths, a high but dull pass, over the northern shoulder of the Punta dell' Argentera. This brought us to the Baths of Valdieri, formerly one of the most famous and fashionable resorts of Piedmontese society. When Turin was a capital and Victor Emmanuel was young, it was here that king and court took their villeggiatura. Here, before he had discovered the superior capabilities of the Graians, was the royal sportsman's chief hunting-ground. Here his gallantry found abundant flowers with which to " bunch " the beauties of his court. But in those days the king lived in his camp, and the bath-house was a comparatively humble affair. In 1857 a company took the place in hand, and built one of those huge barracks that gratify modern Italian taste, which inherits from Rome a love of size for its own sake. Several so-called chalets—detached houses, something between a Swiss cottage and a suburban Turinese villa—have been built near it. The Rocca del Mat opposite is an imposing object, but the situation is too confined for beauty. The immediate environs, however, are pretty, as the deep gorge is clothed in beechwoods, and the two glens which meet opposite the bath-house afford agreeable strolls. In the western glen, the Vallasco, is a large shooting-box of the late king; and above it lie several clear tarns, the limit of the bathers' excursions. Another excuse for a stroll is a large boulder known as the Tomb of Merlin. It is connected in legend with a mysterious individual, a pseudo-Merlin, who is said to have retired from the court of Gian Galeazzo to this solitude.

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[1] See *Hannibal Once More*, by Douglas W. Freshfield. Arnold, 1914.

As we drew near them the Baths looked dull and deserted. But we were little prepared to find how desolate they were. François soon hunted out a "custode" in an adjoining cottage. He proved not in any sense a promising person. His manners were dull, and he could not do more for us than unlock a bedroom. The whole staff had fled; the cellar was locked; the cows had gone down to the valley; there was no bread, nothing but potatoes, and no butter to eat them with. After an interminable absence François returned with the potatoes and a rug to supply the want of bed-clothes. The latter unfortunately proved to contain a starved insect population. The custode's wife was reported worse than her husband, and incapable even of boiling water. It was hard to starve amid the symbols of plenty. The superscriptions "Cucina," "Ristorazione," "Caffé," painted in capital letters over the doors of the corridor seemed to mock our hunger.

But the next morning was as fine as the heart of a mountaineer could desire. We had determined to approach our peak by the Val dell' Argentera, a glen joining the Valletta a mile or two above the baths.

A royal hunting path led us up the first steep slope to a level platform. The range before us consisted of a rugged block on the north, with several jagged peaks separated by very steep snow gullies stretching south from it. One royal road led to the foot of the block on our left, another up to the right. Having in our minds the view obtained from the head of the Val della Rovina, and being also misled by the Piedmontese map, we believed one of the peaks to the right must be the Punta dell' Argentera, and took the right-hand path. It would, I believe, have been at any ordinary time possible, though perhaps not easy, to climb the face of the block on our left. But, as we afterwards ascertained, these rocks were rendered impracticable by the recent snow-fall, which had melted sufficiently to cover them with a glaze of ice. When the path ended we climbed on over steep broken boulders, amongst which weather-beaten pines struggled to a most unusual height, at least 8000 feet.

When we got into the gully by which we proposed to gain the crest the work became severe. The snow was nowhere good, and in places very steep and very soft. It was impossible to make any use of the glazed rocks on either side. We had to work on patiently, taking care not to send down an avalanche with ourselves on the top of it. At last we stepped on to the saddle, where an unwelcome surprise met us. We were only on the crest of a spur dividing two of the branches of the Valletta. Far away across the head of another deep hollow was a fine peak. I made up my mind it could and must be reached, and then gave ten minutes to contemplation. There was one most unusual feature in the wild mountain view. A snowy dip of the main chain framed the dark-blue sea. The pleasure and encouragement that glimpse gave us was immense.

We wanted some encouragement, for there was a bad two hours in front of us before we could hope to reach the saddle at the base of our peak. First, led by some considerate chamois, we scrambled down a gully. Then, at imminent risk to our limbs, we jumped about for some time on the points of boulders, all the interstices between which were filled up by new snow. Then we pounded up a long soft slope to a pass leading to the Val della Rovina.

On our right rose the steep face of the Nasta. It is, no doubt, perfectly easy to climb when the rocks are bare. But the quantity of snow on them now was enormous. It choked all the convenient chimneys, and hid all the best handholds, so that one found oneself forced to climb along the projecting angles. We had gone but a short way when François pulled out the rope; and it was expedient. Going up pretty straight, not without some sharp scrambling, we reached in about an hour from the pass the summit, a narrow ridge beautifully mantled with piles of pure fresh snow.

Seated on its highest boulder, we feasted our eyes on a view of the most wonderful beauty. The main chain had altogether sunk, except where Mont Clapier on our left showed sharp rocks above broad snows. There was nothing to hide the coast-lands of France, from the double top of the Berceau above Mentone to—it was difficult to say what—westwards. Distance beyond distance, glowing in afternoon sunshine, and robed in the most delicate colours, stretched the familiar hills of Provence: Cheiron, Esterel, Montagnes des Maures. The Var shone in the lowlands; a pale smoke showed the train approaching Nice. Out at sea, the Corsican mountains hung midway between heaven and earth, no longer white with winter snows, but blue and purple, and canopied, as at all times, by a luminous cloud suspended high above their crests.

The sudden change, from the fatigue and monotony of climbing and wading among rocks and snow to repose and this beautiful outlook over land and sea, made the hour spent on the top a most ecstatic interlude. Perhaps the fasting by which we had been prepared for it may have rendered the vision more intense, and its memory more vivid.

I despair of conveying by any words of my own an adequate impression of the feelings of such moments, when the climber's body is at rest and his mind at leisure to drink in and add to its memories the glories of another vast landscape. I will rather quote a passage from Hazlitt's *Essays* which expresses at least part of the fascination of the views from mountain tops:

" Distant objects please, because, in the first place, they imply an idea of space and magnitude, and because, not being obtruded too close upon the eye, we clothe them with the indistinct and airy colours of fancy. In looking at the misty mountain tops that bound the horizon, the mind is, as it were, conscious of all the conceivable objects and interests that lie between; we imagine all sorts of adventures in the interim; strain our hopes and wishes to reach the air-drawn circle, or to 'descry new land, rivers, and mountains,' stretching far beyond it; our feelings, carried out of themselves, lose their grossness and their husk, are rarefied, expanded, melt into softness, and brighten into beauty, turning to ethereal mould, sky-tinctured. We drink the air before us, and borrow a more refined existence from objects that hover on the brink of nothing."

It was too soon time to descend. I confess with regret that we neglected to build a stone-man. If it pleases any one in consequence to dispute our ascent, it may be done with impunity. It proved easy to clamber down the broken rocks on the southern face of the peak to the hollow between it and the Cima di Culatta, where a blue tarn lay dark among the new fallen snow. This gave us another hour's tiresome work before we got down to the bare pasturages, where we found tracks leading down into the very head of the Valletta. Here are several groups of chalets, very unlike those of the Central Alps. The shepherd's cabin is a circular beehive-shaped hut roofed with turf. The sheep are penned in at night in a walled fold close at hand, and the principal employment of their custodians seems to be to collect and carry down manure. Hence the spot is termed a "Margaria" (Marga = manure).[1]

We returned to the Baths in the gloaming, and, to obtain the food and rest which their inhospitable emptiness denied us, drove on at once to Valdieri village. We had not done all I had intended in the Maritime Alps, but I had satisfied myself as to the general character of their scenery. The northern glens are wild and stern, but seldom picturesque; the glaciers are small, the peaks are deficient in grandeur of outline compared to those of equal height in the Eastern Alps. But the views from them are of surpassing beauty, and the valleys and gorges on the southern side are full of noble scenery.

In the preceding pages I have recorded spring and autumn visits to the Maritime Alps. In my last I tried another season. One Midsummer's Eve I found myself lunching with a friend and my old guide at Limone on the north side of the Col di Tenda. It was 2 P.M. My proposal to set out at such an hour for an uphill walk naturally struck my companions as ill-timed. However, by concealing the fact that I had in prospect an ascent of 4500 feet, I induced them to face the cloudless afternoon sunshine. For the first two hours the drawbacks of our late start were obvious. The path led first up a gully and then a hillside which were giving out unsparingly the noontide heat they had absorbed. But the moment we reached the top of the spur which divides Limone from the next glen to the east, that of the Certosa, all reproaches were silenced and no one had any breath except for admiration. We faced a pleasant northern breeze, we had the bluest of skies overhead and the bluest of gentian carpets underfoot. Snow was still lying in the hollows, everywhere else the newly thawed brown turf was ablaze with blossom. The range of the Western Alps, culminating in Monte Viso, confronted us. The broad ridge on which we stood rose at its end to what was evidently a panoramic point. At 6 P.M. we had gained the summit of the Besimauda (7887 feet), a crest which projects into the plain at the angle where the Alps bend eastwards before they sink towards their true orographical limit, the valley of the Tanaro.

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[1] There is a fine variety in the terms used for the shepherds' summer quarters in the Italian Alps. We find the classical mandra, mandrone, muanda, baita, malga, vastera, casera.

We had a rich reward for our courage in disregarding the time of day in our start. The panorama was superb. As we looked along the Western Alps we had before us an admirable and singular prospect of valleys opening and ridges breaking down into the plain. The comparison to a relief-map was obvious. But it did no justice to the variety, the symmetry, the charming contrasts of open hillside and forest, and above all the atmosphere which gave colour and a peculiar richness to the broad landscape. The moment was magical. The western mountains had begun to throw their lengthening shadows over the plain of Piedmont; while shafts of sunlight shot through the gaps in the chain, shifting their rays from city to *castello*. Cuneo and Mondovi lay at our feet. Monte Viso towered in the foreground. The Grand Paradis, the Grand Combin, and Monte Rosa carried on the circle to the distant Monte della Disgrazia; looking south the main chain of the Maritimes hid Provence and the Riviera. But to the east a surprise was in store. Beyond the gap between Alp and Apennine, through which a railway runs to Savona, my eyes were caught by a smooth grey surface. On its edge shone a golden bar. We were looking at the Mediterranean, and the bar was the city of Genoa lit by the late evening sunshine. We could recognise through a fine vapoury veil the headland of Porto Fino. At every moment the air grew more lustrous, the local colours more radiant and gem-like.

Having spent as long as we could venture on our mountain, we grudgingly tore ourselves from the splendid scene to seek our way before dusk into the valley of the Certosa. We entered it at a point where a large hay meadow fills the level space between a clear trout stream and a country road shaded by avenues of stately chestnuts and limes. No village or cottages were in sight, until as the dusk fell a farm was passed, and on the farther bank a stately pile of buildings and the white front of a chapel rose above the luxuriant groves.

The Certosa of Pesio (2828 feet), founded in the twelfth century and disestablished by Napoleon I., was one of the largest and wealthiest Carthusian establishments in Italy. The campanile shown in old prints has gone, stupidly destroyed at the time of the dissolution. But the quadrangles and gardens, the half-mile of pillared cloisters, the grand staircase, and lofty refectory remain. Two covered bridges, decorated with frescoes of Saints of the Order, span a bright torrent whose strength is kept within bounds by fern-grown walls. Passing the Casa dei Pescatori and under an archway the visitor reaches a terraced bowling-green shaded by noble limes. Under a second archway leading to the lower quadrangle the grand staircase opens, and up this he mounts to an upper quadrangle. One side of this has been destroyed, and a view is thus opened of the walled wilderness which was once the common garden. Round the remaining sides runs a cloister giving access to the separate dwellings of the former inmates, now turned into apartments for the guests of a Pension. I know no more fascinating resting-place in the Alps.[1]

The monastery is situated near the head of a glen encompassed by fine crags. Its upper portion is without villages, enclosures, or cultivation, a natural wilderness of flowery lawns and chestnut groves, carrying the visitor's mind to regions and ranges that have been less tamed to human uses than the southern skirts of the Alps generally show themselves. The landscape suggests a background more appropriate for the joyous creations of classical legend, for Diana and her nymphs, than for shy recluses. But for the mountaineer—and possibly it had for the monks—the Certosa has in reserve a crowning revelation. Climb any grassy bank and above the tree-tops, framed in the opening of the valley, there will appear a line of snows, Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn, with the Weisshorn rising over the gap of the St. Théodul. Did the "shy recluses" who set up their homes in this lonely glade fix of purpose on a spot where their only outlook on the world beyond might be not on the towns and towers of men, but on the silver sheen of ramparts which it hardly needs a monk's fancy to liken to those of the celestial city?

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[1] Those who count the Col di Tenda and not the Col d' Altare the limit of the Alps may cavil here.

In the chilly outward journey from Turin southwards we passed by Monte Viso. On the return let us before leaving the Western Alps take the short branch line that leads to Saluzzo. The approach to that town has been drawn long ago in lines which bring before us now as well as they did when they were written its great features—the white pyramid and the rich tower-studded plain at its feet. I must quote Chaucer:

> Ther is at the west ende of Itaile
> Down at the root of Vesulus the colde
> A lusty playn, abundant of vitaile,
> Wher many a tour and toun thou maist byholde
> Thet foundid were in tyme of fadres old,
> And many anothir delitable sight
> And Saluces is this noble country hyht.

But Saluzzo itself lies outside the mountains and has few attractions for the traveller. We may pass on at once to Paesana, where, for those who are following the Po, the carriage road used to end and the scenery begins. Near at hand spreads a fertile valley, rich in homesteads, chestnut woods, maize, trailing vines, and all the usual incidents of Italian landscapes. The foot-hills which enclose it are bold without being bare ; they rise, ridge behind ridge, here a rugged edge of cliff, there a beech-crowned knoll, forming many receding distances. Above them all, alone in the sky with the mists and stars, soars the whole height of Monte Viso. It presents itself as the same noble pyramid that has become familiar in so many views from plain or peak, unaltered except in grandeur by close approach. The path to Crissolo and San Chiaffredo lies along the valley beside the bends of the dashing young river. On a September evening two processions meet on it. One made up of families on foot, with their babies strapped on to donkeys, climbs slowly upwards singing hymns or reciting prayers by the way. The other, decked with gay tufts and medals, the tokens of accomplished pilgrimage, is returning joyfully to the villages of the plains.

Beyond a waters-meet a white church and hospice come into view perched high on the right-hand hill. The path follows the stream below and beyond the Sanctuary to the hamlet of Crissolo, one of the highest in the Po valley. It is made up of several groups of houses, the chief of which consists of a tiny town hall and a number of humble inns. The town hall bears inscriptions recording the visits of royal princes, Alpine Clubs, and the members of a Boatman's Society from Turin on their way to explore the river from its source to the sea.

From the village a steep path leads up in about ten minutes to the Sanctuary. The laws of the Italian kingdom with respect to the property of religious corporations have in many parts of the Alps produced a change to the advantage of travellers. Thus at Pesio, at Oropa near Biella, and here at Crissolo the extensive buildings belonging to the Church have been converted into inns, or, as Italians call them, Stabilimenti Alpini, places of bodily and mental refreshment for the people of the plain who cannot afford to spend their lives in idle isolation but are glad of a few days' or weeks' refuge from daily work under the summer sun.

Unlike his great tributaries the Po stays but for a short time among the Alps. Within twelve miles of its birthplace the river is flowing peaceably among verdant foot-hills, within twenty it is already in the great plain. Hence its source, marked out by the noble obelisk of Monte Viso, has since Roman times been known and accessible—and has for long been to the country-folk a favourite place of pilgrimage. This devotion is now paid to the Virgin and a local Saint of obscure history. But it is impossible not to recognise the continuance under another title of an older worship. "Alla beata Vergine" is the sign, or dedication, of one village inn, "Al sorgente del Po" of its next-door neighbour. San Chiaffredo would hardly have had so many devotees except as the successor of the river-god Eridanus.

The Sanctuary consists of a long plain range of buildings looking southwards across the valley. At the end of a terrace stands the church, a building of some age but no architectural distinction. On the right hand on entering is a small chapel surrounded by an iron railing within which are exhibited the relics of the Saint. Round and round it in a constantly renewed circle troop the pilgrims, muttering their prayers and aves. On the walls hang the trophies of the Saint, evidences of his miraculous powers—or of the power of faith on a certain class of physical ailments—in the form of an array of antique crutches mixed up with extremely modern and improved trusses which it seems a pity should be thus wasted on a whitewashed church wall!

Morning and evening the terrace is alive with peasants who throng the stalls which supply pictures of the martial Saint, medals, and bright little tufts. San Chiaffredo, having been a soldier himself, gives Caesar his due, and is liberal enough not to object to the red, white, and green colours which prevail in the tokens of pilgrimage. Inside the Stabilimento the mountaineer could find a clean bed, a good dinner, and wine. But the furniture, floors, and staircases appeared to have taken a vow never to submit to pail or brush from which no secularisation had released them. Moreover, during the pilgrimage month, September, the eating-rooms were taken possession of by a crowd of peasantry well-behaved enough but decidedly noisy.

The view from the windows or the terrace is the chief attraction. At the bottom of a narrow winding glen the young stream of the Po wanders between copses already gilded by the first autumn frosts. Through the opening in the hills towards which the waters flow there is a glimpse of a fragment of the plain of Piedmont, pale and phantom-like in the morning hours, towards evening distinct with fields and little hills. Above the woods spread broad bare downs which serve as a pedestal to Monte Viso, seen hence in all its splendour and symmetry of form with the picturesque black rock known as the Visolotto couching by its side. The downs need the cross lights and shadows of a low sun to show to any advantage the folds of velvet turf, powdered with edelweiss, which cover them. At noonday they form a tame interlude between the great peak and the romantic glen.

It was my fate to see more of Crissolo than I had intended, for, laid up for twenty-four hours by an attack of neuralgia, I was forced to let my two companions climb Monte Viso without me. The September air at this height (4780 feet) was too chilly for sitting long out of doors, and the hours were mostly passed at my window, through which the cloudless Viso persisted in staring in a way I felt in the circumstances to be unkind. Once I set out for a cavern on the opposite side of the valley, the Grotta del Rio Martino, but my courage failed me. However, even had I seen it, I could hardly have ventured to describe it after reading the following warning from the pen of a local handbook writer: " He who would speak of its form and its beauties must have a hand used at once to the geologist's hammer and the painter's brush. Nor is this enough. To give expression to the secret emotions caused by its visit there is need in truth of the sweet sensitiveness of the poet and the productive imagination of the romantic author." The impressions of my day and a half's solitude in the crowded Stabilimento were chequered. There were moments of delight when the plain shone like a golden sea before the sun sank below the heights and the valley depths turned black between the purple hills. The advance of the long line of peasants as they wound in and out of the rocks along a mile or two of rough road was pleasant to watch, and the sound of their hymns as, mingled with the bells of Crissolo, they rose to the ears was appropriately romantic. But vespers came too soon to an end, and then, the Madonna and San Chiaffredo satisfied, the whole first floor of the house was invaded by the peasantry. Each of the six or seven rooms which opened one from another had its tables full. Round each table a swarm of four to ten youths and girls clustered. A couple of open wine flasks were set down before them, and then off they started in part singing, each room having at least one set continually going. "Maria" was the general burden of their songs, but there was a good deal also about profane love. They all behaved admirably, they did not romp, or get tipsy, or quarrel, but their melodies were the reverse of soothing to disordered nerves.

Nor did the literature of Crissolo offer any prolonged occupation. The story of the Saint under whose patronage the Sanctuary lies may be got up pretty thoroughly in a few hours and told in as many minutes. His name appears to be a corruption of Godfrey, Giotfredus. Sanctus Giotfredus was a soldier of the Theban legion. Towards the close of the third century the Emperor Maximian had need of some good soldiers in Gaul, and this legion, numbering nearly 7000 men, was brought from the east. The soldiers had crossed the Alps and were encamped at the modern St. Maurice, the key of the Rhône valley. The Emperor was at Octodurum, now Martigny. Some suspicion was thrown on the fidelity of the troops, who during their sojourn in the east were reported to have become infected with dangerous doctrines. They were required to sacrifice to the Emperor; and also, it is said, to march against the Christians in Gaul instead of against the Belgic tribe they had been summoned to subdue. The legion protested their loyalty but at the same time refused to submit. Twice they were decimated. When this cruel measure failed to break their spirit the incensed Emperor surrounded them with other troops and slew them to a man.

So the legend runs. But an obvious difficulty arises.

If the Thebans all died round their eagles at St. Maurice, how is it that their bones are not there also instead of lying "scattered o'er the Alpine summits cold" in many distant spots? Even martyrs, it may be argued, may run away if by so doing they "live to preach another day," and the text "If they persecute you in one city flee into another" has been quoted as an authority for such conduct. But this explanation fails to satisfy the enthusiasm of the majority of San Chiaffredo's Roman Catholic biographers. He and his comrades, San Vitalis, S. Victor, S. Magnus, and S. Constantius, were, it is assumed, by some chance away from their regiment, on sick leave or in a rearguard, and so escaped the general slaughter only to perish later. There is another version according to which the Saint's bones were brought hither from the Rhône valley after his death, but this is not generally held authentic. Anyhow we are called on to believe that San Chiaffredo was a soldier of the Theban legion and that he is buried at Crissolo.

How, we may next ask, did his tomb come to be preserved or discovered?

Once upon a time—no nearer date can be assigned—a peasant girl was ploughing with a yoke of oxen the hillside on which the church now stands, when of a sudden the plough struck against a huge stone and oxen, plough, and girl went over the edge and down the steep cliff which overhangs the glen of the Ciampagna. Marvellous to relate, no injury resulted from the fall. When the stone which had caused the accident was uncovered an inscription was found on it to the memory of San Chiaffredo, martyr under Diocletian and Maximian. It may be noted that other tombs vouched for by antiquaries have been found near the same spot.

The first historical fact about the shrine seems to be that it was restored in the eighth century by Aripert, King of the Lombards. In succeeding centuries it grew in wealth and renown, thanks to the donations of the Marquises of Saluzzo and the crowd of pilgrims.

The present church is said to have been founded in A.D. 1444. About A.D. 1500 the heretics of the valleys to the north—the Vaudois—began to be troublesome. The injuries inflicted by them were repaired in A.D. 1551 by the French, and the lilies of France are still visible on the columns of the nave. In A.D. 1593 the precious bones of the Saint were transferred to the Castle of Revello and remained there till 1642, when they were again transported to Saluzzo, only a few fragments (a rib and a hand) being still left at the Sanctuary for the adoration of the faithful. "On June 12, 1665," writes Bishop Agostino della Chiesa, "the heretics burst out of Val di Luserna, sacked Crissolo, broke violently into the Sanctuary and parish church, overthrew the statue of the Virgin with their arquebuses, smashed shrines and pulpits, cast to the winds books and vestments." The priest, foreseeing the peril, and fearing perhaps that the Saint might not think so small a part of himself worth a miracle, had taken the precaution of hiding the rib and hand in a more remote chapel. Even there they did not escape the fury of the Vaudois, who broke open the altar in which they had been deposited and contemptuously scattered the bones, not, however, so thoroughly but that they were recoverable by the pious care of their guardian. A few days later the marauders were properly punished, being caught on another of their forays by the horsemen of the Duke of Savoy and cut to pieces.

Besides a multitude of miraculous cures, the Saint's sanctity has been attested by more than one remarkable event. Two large caldrons in which he was wont to make soup with his companions have been several times stolen but have each time returned of their own accord to the shrine. Again, a thief, trying to break open a cupboard containing valuable objects, pulled it over on himself so that he could not escape—which was clearly a very remarkable miracle and does not seem to be disputed in any quarter.

Here we have the Roman view of the Vaudois as set down by the local biographer of our Saint!

The annual number of pilgrims to the shrine of San Chiaffredo in A.D. 1833 was about six thousand, and judging from the numbers we saw I should doubt if it had decreased in the last ninety years. For visitors who come from far to worship Monte Viso I should add that there is now not only a decent inn in the village, but a climbers' hotel at an altitude of 6700 feet on the Piano del Re at the very source of the Po.

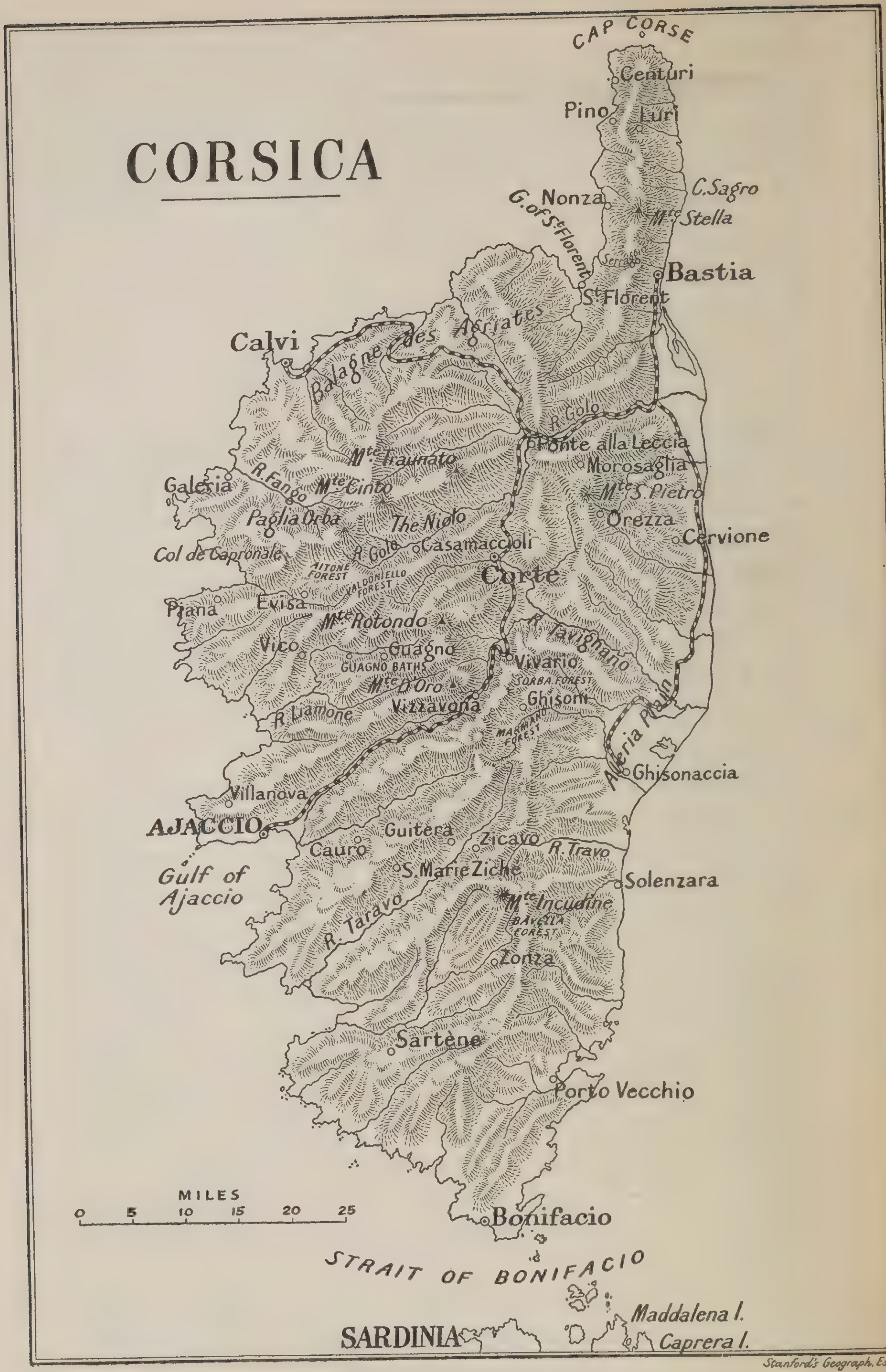
II

MIDSUMMER IN CORSICA

I OWE perhaps my best reason for the present chapter to my old guide François Dévouassoud. " Monsieur," he said to me one day, when more than usually impressed by the granite mountains we were wandering through, " I think that when ' le bon Dieu ' was building the Alps, he must have had a bit left over and have thrown it down in the Mediterranean to make Corsica." Viewed in this light as a remnant of the Alps, Corsican mountains come clearly within the scope of hill-lovers, and call for more attention than we have yet given them.

Seventeen hours after leaving the port of Marseilles our steamer cast its anchor in the land-locked Gulf of Ajaccio. The approach to the island was in my case marred by clouds —positively their last appearance for the season in Corsica. The Gulf may, in general, be best compared to that of La Spezzia. It lacks the gaiety, as well as the unique islands, of the Bay of Naples, the stately splendour, the oriental juxtaposition of rich plain and golden mountain of Palermo. It is a fine, rather than a fascinating picture ; the outlines are bold and picturesque ; the details lack the usual grace and variety of the south. Man has done little or nothing to decorate nature by his additions to the landscape.

Ajaccio itself has a peculiarity common to all Corsican towns and even villages ; its houses are too tall for the size of the place. It looks as if a quarter had been cut out of a big city, where ground rents were excessive, and put down among the cactuses, aloes, and orange groves of the Corsican coast. The abnormal height may be only a development of


CORSICA
CAP CORSE
Centuri
Pino
Luri
C. Sagro
Nonza
G. of St. Florent
Mte. Stella
Serraggio
Bastia
St. Florent
Calvi
Balagne des Agriates
R. Golo
Ponte alla Leccia
Morosaglia
Mtes. S. Pietro
Mte. Traunato
Galeria
R. Fango
Mte. Cinto
Paglia Orba
The Niolo
Orezza
Cervione
Col de Capronale
R. Golo
Casamaccioli
Aitone Forest
Valdoniello Forest
Corte
Piana
Evisa
Mte. Rotondo
R. Tavignano
Vico
Guagno
Guagno Baths
Vivario
Mte. D'Oro
Sorba Forest
Ghisoni
R. Liamone
Vizzavona
Marmano Forest
Aleria Plain
Ghisonaccia
Villanova
AJACCIO
Guitera
Cauro
Zicavo
R. Travo
S. Marie Ziché
Solenzara
Gulf of Ajaccio
Mte. Incudine
R. Taravo
Bavella Forest
Zonza
Sartène
Porto Vecchio
MILES
0 5 10 15 20 25
Bonifacio
STRAIT OF BONIFACIO
Maddalena I.
Caprera I.
SARDINIA

Stanford's Geograph. Esta

the ancient Corsican dwelling, which was built tall to serve as a fortress, having no windows near the ground. It seemed to me possible to trace the stages between the rude tower-like houses of the mountain hamlets and the overgrown warrens of Corte or Ajaccio.

The town is naturally full of Napoleonic pictures and statues. The best, by Viollet-le-Duc, represents the first Emperor on horseback, his four brothers on foot filling the corners of his pedestal. After reading Madame de Rémusat's *Memoirs*, one understands the difficulty the King of Holland finds in posing, or being posed, as a noble Roman, and is not inclined to be hard on the designer of what, as a whole, may be considered a successful work. In the suburbs stands an English church which, strange to say, is an ornament to the place, the architect having made a singularly happy use of the richly coloured granites of the island. Beyond this is a spacious drive and "Rond Point," from which roads branch off up the hill and along the bay

The sun was now shining, and the charm of the island began to fasten upon us. We mounted the red granitic hill-side, resting in a garden of palm trees among flowering cactuses, aloes raising their huge candelabra blossoms, scented magnolias, pomegranates, myrtles, cistus, olives, oranges. Distant snows shone between the palm branches, a bare reminder of winter and the north, without menace to coasts secure in their midsummer glow, and responding to it with a wealth of blossom and fragrance unknown to our rain-beaten shores.

We had landed on Midsummer Day. A black patch on the "Place" showed where a pagan bonfire had burnt itself out on the previous night. When dusk fell we were treated to a Christian celebration, consisting of a procession of several brotherhoods in green or red-and-white hoods, attendants bearing huge crucifixes, priests chanting, a band playing very secular music, and two little rival John the Baptists in sheep-skins and gilt halos. One of the babies clutched a large toy lamb with gilt horns ; his rival triumphantly conducted a live animal. A tall gaunt man in a brown robe rushed about from side to side, protecting the Saints from the familiarities of their contemporaries with a cross 8 feet long, which he brought down heavily on the shoulders of any obtrusive urchins. After marching round the town, the procession came to a halt in the lane next our hotel, in front of St. John's church. The street was illuminated, and coloured lights were burnt. In the clear dark southern gloaming the men of the brotherhoods in their old-world capes showed like unreal figures—ghosts of an old and passing order. The sharp rat-a-tat of the soldiery seemed to break a spell and disperse a vision. But who can foresee fate ? Little did that drummer think that he was sounding his own, as well as the Jesuits' requiem : that the Republic was about to dispense with its *tambour majors*, as well as its religious orders.

Thus much of the city and religion of Ajaccio.

Before we run up and down the island, looking out for any peaks worthy to be devoured, let me try to give a rough outline of its mountain system, which is generally ill-explained and little understood. Ordinary maps show a great backbone, running more or less north and south, from Cap Corse to Bonifacio. Like too many generalisations, this does not correspond exactly with the facts.

There is a limestone ridge running from Cap Corse due south to a point east of Corte, broken only in one place, where the Golo carries through it the drainage of the central uplands. Its highest summits are Monte Stella, 4570 feet, north of Bastia, and the Monte di S. Pietro, above Orezza, 5445 feet.

Down the western side of the island our maps suggest a parallel chain running from Calvi to near Sartène. This is only true in a very restricted sense, as any mountain panorama at once shows the traveller. The watershed is where the maps place it. But the highest ridges run at right angles to it, that is, roughly, east and west. You can see their continuation in the capes of the western coast. The mountains, regarded close at hand, rise in blocks rather than in a chain—a common feature with granite.

It follows from this physical fact that in driving up or down the western coast of the island one has to cross a gap of between 2000 and 4000 feet between each river basin. These basins, south of Ajaccio, are broad fertile valleys rising from the sea in slopes, covered below with *maquis*, the Corsican bush, above with vines, olives, chestnuts, and beech-wood. Every one has heard of the "maquis," the scent of which, carried miles out to sea by the land breeze, warns sailors of their approach to Corsica. Imagine a common sprinkled with myriads of purple and white cistus blossoms, shining star-like in the pure sunshine, tall heaths, tough arbutus, frequent bushes of myrtle, box, and other evergreen fragrant shrubs, which combine to diffuse through the light dry atmosphere a rich warm pungent scent. As the road winds up the spurs, chestnut groves and vineyards supplant the "maquis"; dog-roses hang down from the hedges to rival the acres of cistus; the asphodels, already withered on the coast, are still in bloom beside beech-copses, where foxgloves, tall purple orchids, and masses of common fern might, but for their classical presence, make us forget for a moment the Mediterranean.

Here and there, at rare intervals, a village shows itself. Unlike the closely clustered nests of the Apennines, Corsican villages generally break up into several groups of houses, thus compensating for their rarity by making the most of themselves. The church—outside the Castagniccia, the great bowl of chestnut forest that lies behind the hills east of Corte—has rarely a bell-tower. The bells are rudely hung on a strong wooden framework separate from the building. Nor has it a graveyard. Only the meanest Corsican consents to be laid in common ground. To be buried in a cemetery appears to be equivalent with them to dying in the workhouse with our poor. Each well-to-do family builds its own tomb, a whitewashed dome like those of Syria, or, in the Roman tradition, with classic columns and portico, on some commanding knoll. The poor set a granite or wooden cross under their chestnut trees or by the wayside. The plan is not without sentimental advantages where land remains for generations in the same family and the population is scanty.

It is perhaps difficult to give by comparison to Alpine travellers an idea of the landscapes of western Corsica. To those who frequent Cannes I should be content to say that it is like the Esterel on a very much larger and nobler scale. The vegetation is similar. The coast mountains (putting out of the question Monte d' Oro and others which lift snowy heads in the background) are twice as high ; the roads over them rise to 2000 and 3000 feet, and the broad valleys, when the blue bay turns into a valley, are not flat expanses like that of Fréjus, but undulating hill-regions, only valleys in contrast to the abrupt ridges which divide them. These ridges, again, are so wide apart, so broken, and (compared to the Alps) so moderate in height that they seldom for long confine the landscape, the boundaries of which are constantly shifting. There is no scenery like this, so far as I know, on the Italian Cornice ; for there is no spot where hills and valleys equally grand in scale and picturesque in form throw themselves so boldly, or open so frankly, on the deep sea. In other words—to go to the prose and root of the matter—nowhere in Italy do successive ridges of granite break at a right angle on the Mediterranean.

But I have lingered, perhaps, too long near the sea-level. Patience ! We have before us an object which will excuse these wanderings ; we are on our way, as some one once wrote at the Grands Mulets, to " higher ground."

From the shore at Ajaccio two broad snow-flecks may be seen, even after midsummer, over the nearer ranges far away to the south-east. I had no difficulty in determining that the mountain which bore them must be the same I had noted in April from a Sicilian-bound steamer as dominating all the south of the island, the Monte Incudine of maps, the Incodiné of local use. We started for its snows.

Having halted at Cauro and Ste Marie Ziché (at both places we found excellent inns) and crossed two chestnut-draped ridges, our carriage brought us early in the afternoon to the Baths of Guitera. After the excessive luxury of many continental baths the biblical simplicity of the place was refreshing. We found three or four elderly females in dressing-gowns sitting up to their necks in a round pool of warm sulphur water in the open air. Our curiosity satisfied as to the fountain and its nymphs, we ran down to the bank of the Travo, which flows under the bath-house. It is a delicious trout stream, purling and swirling along under thick evergreen shades between the red stems of cork trees and banks of eight-feet-high Osmunda.

The road up to Zicavo follows its banks for a mile, till the torrent from Monte Coscione bursts out from a cleft in the eastern hills. It then climbs up and into the gorge, rising some 1500 feet before it joins at the top of the scattered village the "Route Nationale" from Sartène to Vivario, which traverses the centre of the island.

On general maps Zicavo appeared the nearest village to our snow-patches, which were now, however, completely hidden by intervening ridges. We took a charming walk towards sunset on the Sartène road. It runs terrace-wise along the steep face of Monte Coscione, through a romantic evergreen forest. Two torrents are crossed, tumbling down out of pathless ravines. Just beyond the first we found a track for the morrow.

Early next morning we were mounting a zigzag path which climbs steeply under the shade of noble chestnuts. Presently the hill flattened in front and the forest gave place to asphodel meadows and pastures capped by granite blocks. Here begins the plateau of Monte Coscione. A large tract of uplifted land, with an average level of 4000 feet above the sea, is divided into shallow glades rather than glens by low ridges, one of which is the watershed of the island. Much of it is bare, but the portion we crossed was about equally divided between pasturage and beech forest. These beech forests are the noblest of their kind. The trees themselves grow to an immense size, and the ground aids to show off their dimensions. It is sufficiently undulating to lend effect to individual trees, but not mountainous enough to dwarf them. The trunks are covered with long streamers of moss; granite blocks richly stained with lichens lie about among the fallen stems. Bright trout streams flowing through open lawns, where cows and horses were pasturing, gave life to the silence and solitude of the primeval wood.

After crossing several brooks and ridges and passing some stone huts, directing our course by faith rather than sight, we found ourselves on pasturages falling towards one of the glens of the eastern slope, with the broad snow-streaked mass of Monte Incudine still some way off. To reach it we had to descend to a stream, a charming companion, here spreading itself over smooth sheets of granite, there buried in a deep channel whence its waters burst out suddenly victorious.

Monte Incudine presents on this side long steep slopes of broken boulders covered with low brushwood, and has much the appearance of a Scotch or Welsh mountain. The highest ridge is composed of a very friable granite rock, worn smooth in places but broken by clefts, the last of which is deep enough to render access to the eastern top difficult without a long circuit or the aid of the rope. To the right of the summit a huge block,

> Couch'd on the bare top of the eminence,

served as a finger-post in the last climb. It would be easy to descend into a valley leading directly south towards Zonza, or north-east into another, a very wild forested glen, opening towards the eastern coast.

The view from Monte Incudine is probably the most beautiful in Corsica. All the island south of Ajaccio (and that town itself) is in sight. The panorama is full of variety and picturesque incident. Steep pine-clad hills sink abruptly to the eastern sea, on which the vessels seemed to crawl at our very feet; glens open southward on a rich glowing valley; the blue depths of the bays are fringed with a double edge of white sand and shallow green water. The noble granite aiguilles of the Forest of Bavella, a strange array of horns and pinnacles, stretch across the foreground; to the left the long fiord of Porto Vecchio runs far into the land; in the centre of the picture are spread out the broad Straits of Bonifacio, studded with pale isles and islets.

Two larger than the rest are associated with heroic names. On the left is Caprera, the home of the liberator of the Two Sicilies. The one beside it, Maddalena, is linked with even greater memories, with Nelson and Napoleon. Under its lee, in a bay Nelson christened "Agincourt Sound," the

British fleet lay for months before the battle of the Nile, watching for the French squadron sheltered behind the guns of Toulon. Two silver candlesticks on the altar of the village church record Nelson's gratitude for the friendly services of the inhabitants. It was in attacking the same village that Napoleon, in 1793, first saw fire and met with a repulse, due, it is said, to the inefficient way in which his expedition had been provided by old Paoli, then Governor of Corsica, under the French Republic.

Beyond Caprera the bold headlands of Sardinia break down into the opal sea which stretches Sicily-wards. On Sardinia's further flank lies the shadow-like Asinara. Eastwards we overlook the level plains and lagoons of Aleria. On the hill beyond Cervione is just distinguishable—memorable to us as the capital of the mock-king Theodore, an absurd personage as to whose history I once, I flatter myself, made some discoveries, involving in his adventure both the Turkish and the English Governments to an extent hitherto unsuspected by historians. Westwards we command the capes and deep bays of the coast as far as Ajaccio. Northwards, Monte Rotondo, seen in its noonday nakedness, is no very imposing feature, and but for the Paglia Orba, whose curious tusk protrudes on the left, the outline of the central group is tame. For mountain views the Alpine Clubman is spoilt, but for sea views, and they are no less beautiful, he must go far, perhaps as far as Greece, to find such another.

I will not attempt to describe the central carriage road through the Forests of Marmano and Sorba and past Ghisoni to Vivario. Both Ghisoni and Vivario possess excellent inns. Though mere mountain villages, each boasts a fountain, one a bronze Neptune, the other a Diana, worthy of a large town. The descent from the second pass into Vivario is very striking. It is effected by excessively sharp zigzags through a noble pine forest. Between the branches tower the bold forms of Monte d' Oro, Monte Rotondo, and, in the distance, behind the golden uplands of Corte, the crags of Monte Traunato. By evening light it is a magnificent mountain view.

From Vivario we crossed a mule pass (inaccurately laid down on most maps), the Bocca di Manganello, which leads to the Baths of Guagno, traversing the range south of Monte Rotondo. The distance is counted as forty kilomètres, or some ten hours. In place of ascending Monte Rotondo from Corte—the usual plan—we took it on our way over the pass. I cannot recommend this course. The valley between Monte d' Oro and Monte Rotondo is long and dull. The forest has been grievously injured by fire and woodmen, and the road up the glen is a mere bed of rough stones.

From our pass we looked down a steep narrow chestnut-forested glen to the western sea. A pleasant breeze blew from it, and tempered the mid-day sun as we climbed the long ridge which fell from the north towards us. Where it was first broken into rough teeth we kept under it on the eastern slopes, and then up over snow and shale to a rounded crest. Another top rose beyond it. Arrived on the second we found that we had a good deal more than we had looked for still before us. Five hundred feet below, at the bottom of a steep bank of snow, lay a frozen lake. It was surrounded, except to the south, by a bold fence of steep shattered granite crags ; the highest immediately opposite us showed a face which any one unused to Alps might have thought formidable. The snow-slope at our feet was steep enough and not too hard for glissading. We were soon in the frozen cirque skirting the head of the lake, a strange and striking scene anywhere, doubly so at midsummer in the latitude of Perugia.

The ascent of the opposite crags cost me some pains. There is one easy way to the right. François despised it, attracted by a granite staircase nearer us, the last flight of which proved incomplete. I soon found myself clutching the crag above my head with " hooked hands," and moving my feet about vainly for foothold, while François, having relieved me of my umbrella, remarked with more than his usual calmness, " Ça va bien." However, the granite was sound and it was not difficult to avoid its smoothnesses, so that before long we were in the gap of the ridge at the western base of the final tower, a rock fifty feet high. This was easily turned, and in five minutes more we stood beside the stone man.

Towards Corte the mountain fell away in long steep slopes, of which, for at least 1000 feet, snow covered the most part. It must, I think, be up this side that the ordinary route runs.

The view did not impress me. The central uplands, which form a large portion of it, are bare and arid, and the ridge of Monte Cinto stretches across the northern horizon like a long flat screen. Comparatively little of the coast was visible. It was curious to notice how completely the tops of the mountains between us and the Cinto ridge were flattened down, while the crest we stood on was a set of bristling teeth. There seem to be two makes of granite in Corsica—one friable and unable to resist sub-aerial denudation, the other, which bursts out in the Cinto range, Monte Rotondo, Monte d' Oro, and, above all, in the Forest of Bavella, hard and defiant of the elements, and fronting them with bold spires and pinnacles.

On our return, François could not resist one little snow-couloir at an angle of about fifty, but for the rest we followed the proper route, which keeps to the left or south under the ridge till a perfectly easy way down to the lake offers. Striking for its outlet we crossed the stream on the ice, and climbed out of the cirque by a short sharp wall of 150 feet, whence it was easy to traverse at a level to the point below the teeth on the ridge we had come up.

In place of returning to the pass, we now bore to the right, and reached the head of the glen we had seen below us by keeping north of a rocky boss. The descent of some 4000 feet was very long and steep. It was also pathless, or very nearly so, for the whole distance ; and the chance of spraining an ankle—an accident heard of so seldom that one may well fancy there must be a legion of good little angels employed to look after mountaineers—was materially increased by the distraction in front. If from the top the panorama had been disappointing, the failure was more than made up for by the lovely views of the Gulf of Ajaccio and the lower hill country, which was now spread out before us in all its beauty and variety. Jagged ridges, noble chestnut forests, swelling hills and vales everywhere, and, beyond all, the Midland Sea, glowing beneath the afternoon sunshine

Somewhat knee-weary we reached, in company with a flock of lean goats, the huts at the foot of the pass. There are few pines hereabouts; the forests are of broad-leafed trees, mostly chestnuts. In the upper glen there is, for some distance only, the worst of tracks. The scenery is strangely wild; no villages or clearings break the noble monotony of rock, wood, and stream. Lower down a second hut and a few stone houses, not permanently inhabited, are passed. Very bold granite pinnacles cut the sky, and the landscape, if not on so large a scale, is wilder and more romantic than in our more familiar haunts. The weak point in almost all Alpine scenery is that before grandeur begins sylvan beauty ends. The sycamores above Rosenlaui, the beech-woods of Molveno, the chestnut groves of Val Maggia are among the exceptions which prove the rule. Corsica, from its latitude, and also from its mountains beginning at the sea-level, avoids any such shortcoming. This feature in its scenery, its glorious beech and chestnut forests, has not been sufficiently insisted on, partly because many travellers have been here too early in the year to see them in perfection, partly because they have felt it their duty to pay their first homage to that *rara avis* among European conifers, the Corsican pine. It deserves all respect—how much respect those will feel who go straight to or from Corsica to the Alps. The Alpine pines, after these island giants, look only fit to be put in a box and given to children to play with. The great cedar-like trees of Valdoniello or Aitone more than equalled any expectations I had formed. Lear's[1] woodcuts barely do them justice, for the effect of the forest is not so much that of a collection of Aaron's rods as might be gathered from his plates. It is true the pines have a tendency to run to stem, but many of them are fine cedar-like trees. One more criticism on the best English work on Corsica. The plates give to many of the landscapes a gloomy aspect which seems to me the reverse of the true one. Bear this in mind; Corsican scenery is not in the least stern or savage; it is rich, splendid, shining, romantic.

I return to our path. By a happy accident my rough

[1] *Journal of a Landscape Painter in Corsica*, Edward Lear, 1870.

map indicated exactly the point at which the stream had to be crossed. A steep ascent of a few hundred feet was followed by a long fairly level terrace commanding beautiful views down the valley of the Liamone towards Vico.

Guagno, the first village west of the mountains, lies in a different glen to that we were descending, and on the southern spurs of a ridge which divides two of the sources of the stream. Our path, therefore, after circling round several bays, crossed by a convenient gap the crest on our left. Five minutes later, as dusk fell, we came on the first scattered houses and pigs. Pigs in Corsican villages are as predominant as in Ireland. The village inn was homely enough at first sight, and the maiden in charge was, in her mother's absence, undisguisedly embarrassed at such late arrivals. But, despite her apologies, she produced a good supper and a clean bed. Corsica is one of those happy countries where the people themselves cook and eat well. Their soups are strong, their mutton and potatoes excellent. Those who can live and walk on the warm water and sodden veal of the German Alps, or on the flint-like bread and red cheese which test peripatetic philosophers within the twenty-five mile radius from Charing Cross, need not fear to trust themselves here. The cup of coffee which concludes the meal is often worthy to be sipped cross-legged with the face turned towards Arabia. Corsica has, her historians say, had direct connection with the East—Phœnicia or what not. As we sip our coffee, François and I count over the oriental traits we have noted in the island—*Imprimis*, coffee ; second, mutton stew ; separate domed tombs ; the taciturnity, general laziness, and lounging habits of the men ; the custom of making the women work. For Eastern Christianity corrects the Moslem idea that woman is a plaything, and decides that, as she is not that, she is an agricultural implement.

Daylight showed a lovely view over forested glens, and a charming walk of six miles down a good road in the brilliant morning sunshine brought us to the Baths of Guagno. This is the largest bathing establishment in the island, about fifty miles from Ajaccio and ten from Vico. It was the only place in the island where I found a supply of Paris papers. As a rule, the Corsican is content with his own journals; and his journals rarely think it necessary to mention "continental" events. This is no new peculiarity, for Boswell tells us that the *Corsican Gazette* of his time admitted "nothing but the news of the island, no foreign intelligence nor private anecdotes." But then it was published once in three months. The situation of the Baths is not so well suited for excursions as either Vico or Guagno, and the inns at either place being supportable, they will not detain the passing traveller. Their season is from July 15 to the end of August.

From Guagno I went by Vico and Evisa and the forest path of Valdoniello to the Niolo, and thence across a pass and down the picturesque gorge of the Tavignano to Corte; crossed over the limestone range to Orezza and the eastern coast, and ended up with a tour of the long northern promontory, Cap Corse.

In passing through the Niolo I had perfect views of the Monte Cinto range. Both the Paglia Orba and Monte Cinto itself are accessible from this side. They are connected by cliffs in which a pass of some difficulty may be discovered. The southern side of the chain is perfectly bare and arid, like all the Niolo it overhangs; but the glen above the forester's house in the Forest of Valdoniello offers a pleasant access to the Paglia Orba. These peaks should be climbed at a season when there is a fair chance of seeing the view of the continent, which must be the great feature of their panorama. At midsummer the far-off horizon is, as a rule, hazy.

I have done with mountain ascents, but there are still some mountain scenes I cannot leave unpraised, even though my best praise must altogether fail to do them justice.

Vico, Evisa, La Castagniccia, Pino, Nonza are names which will not easily pass from my memory. Each brings back a vivid and distinct picture, which I must endeavour, however poorly, to reproduce.

Vico is a townlet planted on the side of a richly wooded hollow, shaped like a theatre, and facing the valley of the

Liamone, which leads the eyes up to the crags and chestnut forests of the central mountains. The river escapes through a cleft to the right under rugged hills. At the back, shutting out the sea, rises a conical chestnut-covered peak. Near at hand hamlets are scattered amongst the vines and maize-fields, and a convent, with a white church and a terraced garden, shaded by tall magnolias, occupies a neighbouring brow. The opposite hills catch and reflect the sun's light long after Vico and its chestnut groves are in deep shadow.

Evisa recalls a wilder and more wonderful landscape. The village stands in the centre of a mountain-girt basin on a high promontory which projects from the central range between two deep gulfs—gulfs hollowed out to a depth of 2000 feet between stern scantly wooded granite cliffs. They join beneath it in a gorge which cleaves through the granite down to the sea.

Imagine on either hand two huge bright-red rock propylons, 4000 feet high; draw across between them, like a curtain, the intensely opaque blue sheet of the mid-day midsummer Mediterranean, its horizontal line meeting and contrasting with the vertical outlines of the crags, and its deepest blue with their strong ruddiness; spread overhead a veil of vapourless sky, white with excess of sunshine, fringed where it sinks down to meet the sea horizon with the strangest indefinable amethystine colours. The scene does not seem as if it could be part of the same planet as the dim green earth we northerners belong to. It is weird and mystical, not out of keeping with that last book of the Bible which was written in a Mediterranean island. But Hebrew exuberance overlays the austerity of nature with too lavish imagery. Dante would have done better here; with a few of his direct lines he might have planted Evisa for ever on the Mountain of Purgatory. The rich chestnut groves of the hollow below the village might serve as a fit halting-place for noble souls on their journey from sea to summit.

Turning homewards we look at Evisa from a more human point of view. Behind it the pine forests rise in deep shadowy folds up to a broad mountain crest, the pass to the Niolo.

Beyond the great forests lies a broad bare upland basin, closed in on all hands by mountains, bare, rugged, and, on the north, precipitous. The lower slopes are brown and monotonous, the valley-bottom is flat, featureless, and defaced by a half-made road. The scenery is, in a word, ugly. No sooner has a label been found to save further trouble than one is aware that the first painter will quarrel with the definition.

There is nothing picturesque in form in the Niolo, but, at certain moments, there is rare beauty of colour. At sunset the air and hillsides glow with reds and purples, the sky is strangely luminous, and objects on the earth seem by reflection to gain the same quality. Those who have been on the Persian Highlands may easily picture the local colouring ; those who wish to see Persia without the journey had better pay a visit to the Niolo. The inns there—at least the one we tried at Casamaccioli—are bad and full of insects.

Passing by Corte we mount from Ponte alla Leccia by long wearisome zigzags to Morosaglia, Paoli's residence, where a large school or college forms a more living monument to Boswell's friend than his monument in Westminster Abbey. For two miles farther the road winds upwards. Looking back, a local thunderstorm sweeps over the bare snowy crests of Monte Cinto and Monte Rotondo, its cloud-masses sharply defined against the all-pervading blueness of the upper vault, its shadow lying blue athwart the sunny red and gold of the nearer hills.

At the Pass of Porto one of those magical changes, the chance of which makes any *pass* an excitement, awaits us. The central uplands are suddenly left behind. In front stretches a new region, the Castagniccia, or Chestnut Country. A maze of glens and ridges runs up against the mountain on which we stand ; hill and vale alike are draped in chestnut forest, swathed in bracken. Villages and convents, Italian in character, are scattered on the ridges and slopes. Wide and shining, beyond these fascinating hills and dales, spreads the Tuscan Sea, strewn with islands : flat Pianosa, mountainous Monte Cristo, Elba, Gorgona, floating in the haze between sky and water. Along the horizon, marking the line of the mainland, great masses of cumulus cloud are piled up into the likeness of mightier Mont Blancs and Jungfraus.[1]

With a foreground fresh and green as any English glade, spacious and exquisite in its arrangement and aerial distances as Greece or Asia Minor, the picture before us is unsurpassable in loveliness. It is surely destined, sooner or later, to a more than European reputation, for its beauty is of the kind which appeals to every taste.

The terrace road, as if loth to lose the view, circles for several miles among the ferns and foxgloves at the base of Monte San Pietro, before it plunges down, past two picturesque hamlets—provided with inns for water-drinkers—into the depths of the chestnut forest, where, beside a stream, in a situation recalling the Baths of Lucca, nestles the source of Orezza, a spring producing a nasty but wholesome mineral water exported to all parts of the Continent.

All the guide-books talk of Cap Corse. But they fail to give prominence to the facts which give the key to the scenery of its two coasts. Down a promontory, eight to ten miles wide, runs a range 3000 to 4500 feet high; its crest is close to the western coast, its valleys run eastwards. Hence the western Cornice is a terrace along an always steep, sometimes sheer, mountain side, while the eastern crosses a succession of low maquis-covered spurs, and is, beyond Cap Sagro, in parts monotonous and almost tame.

Pino is one of the most beautiful sites on the western coast. It is also important as the spot where the cross-road through the Vale of Luri and under Seneca's tower—in truth a Genoese watch-tower on the spine of the cape and commanding both coasts—falls into the western Cornice. The village groups itself in the most picturesque way imaginable, on a hillside broken by a deep ravine. Down on the seashore above the little Marina, where the one fisherman keeps his boat, is a large convent; a church occupies a projecting brow 400 feet above; higher still, and right and left, every vantage-ground is occupied by groups of well-built villas, by an old Genoese tower, or a domed whitewashed tomb. It would be easy to believe a scene-painter had "arranged" the landscape. The slopes are terraced into gardens of *cedratiers* and lemons, olive groves and vineyards, sheltered from the rough gales of winter by high palisades woven of Mediterranean heath from the neighbouring *maquis*.

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[1] This is not a touch added for effect. The illusion was singularly complete, so that my guide, whose enthusiasm for this view almost exceeded my own, seriously pointed out to me an imaginary snow-peak in the direction of Rome!

After a day of blinding splendour we watched from the "loggia" of the little inn the sun sink upon the broad sea, firing a long track across the waves as it fell, a vivid blazing ball, beneath the waters, and bringing into sight for a few moments on the northern horizon shadows warm with a dull reflected glow, which can hardly have been clouds, for they had the form of the Maritime Alps.

Nonza, farther south on the same coast of Cap Corse, is one of the most curious villages of the island. It stands like an eagle's nest, perched 1000 feet above the sea on a black rock on the mountain side. Its houses, built level with the edge of the cliffs, formed in olden days a sufficient rampart against marauders. On one side of the little piazza the view is open down the steep zigzag way to the Marina, where on the rock-bound coast the dark waves, stirred by a night of west wind, had suddenly joined battle with the brown coast. The waves leapt up, green where the light shone through them, swishing and swirling, rushing and roaring into the caves, before broken into foam they fell back on to the masses which bore on unceasingly to their support. On our backs the sun burnt like a great fire; against our faces as we stretched across the parapet there rushed up from the sea an air fresh and cold as that which on a summer's day in the Alps pours out of the chasm of a great waterfall. "Pour moi j'aime mieux ces avalanches-là que toutes les avalanches de Mont Blanc," exclaimed François. The comparison was original but not new.

> Cliffs of emerald topt with snow,
> That lifted and lifted, and then let go
> A great white avalanche of thunder—

Lowell has written of.

I might add many more wayside sketches from the Corsican coast:

Sartène, which lies inland in the southern part of the island, is delightfully placed on a hill and the slopes round the town are a garden of spring flowers embedded in natural rockery. The drive from it to Solenzaro on the eastern coast through the Forest of Bavella and under the weird granite needles pictured by Lear is full of variety.

The wonderful crags of La Piana, red granite tusks of the most fantastic shapes, hollowed and pierced by the salt blasts that beat about them, framed in a luxuriant tangle of *maquis*, and thrown up against the sapphire floor of the Midland Sea, are counted among the famous sights of the island. There are others which live in my memory.

Romantic Luri, surrounded like some Eastern village by rich irrigated gardens, with its incongruous citizens—*de retour d'Amérique*—in the strictest Transatlantic Sunday best, chimney-pot hats and black frock-coats, reading the last placarded speech of Gambetta under the olive and lemon groves outside the church, while the women congregate in the deeper shade within.

The first view of the Gulf of St. Florent and the hills of the Balagna, crowned by the snows of Monte Cinto, as seen from the terrace road near Centuri, across a foreground of red and black rocks fretted like a natural Alhambra by the salt wet winds. The glen of the Serraggio, near St. Florent, with its column of oleanders, two miles long by one hundred yards wide, all ablaze with huge heads of pink blossom, escorting a bright stream to the very edge of the purple waves.

The double coast-view from the pass between St. Florent and Bastia ; Bastia itself, backed by its many-folded screen of olive-clad mountains—Cadenabbia turned into a seaport.

After an interval of several years I returned to the island with my old guide, this time in April, in the hope of climbing its two finest peaks, the Monte Cinto and Paglia Orba. But in Corsica April showers are apt to take the shape of bitter snow and hail storms. We found Evisa close to the snow-level and the pass to the Niolo barely open. The only mountain top we gained was that of the Monte d' Oro (7884 feet). In the state we found it the ascent involved a good deal of step-cutting and was even held impossible by the local guides of the inn at the Foce di Vizzavona, a summer resort of the inhabitants of Ajaccio.

We spent some days at Evisa, alternately confined by bad weather or scrambling on the lower crags that encircle the sources of the Golo. Our finest walk was a long one from Evisa to Galeria, over the Col de Capronale, the Gemmi of Corsica. An undulating forest-track led us for several hours through scenery of extraordinary picturesqueness, foreground of rocks and trees, glimpses of wild mountain forms and capes and between them in the distance the surface of the Mediterranean gleaming or dark as the light or shadow passed over it.

We looked in vain for *moufflon*, but came on a busy family of wild boars. The descent on the farther side was abrupt, a zigzag staircase cut in red porphyry cliffs and between the stems of gigantic pines. Lower down these gave place to ilex woods, overhung by the enormous buttresses of the Paglia Orba, amongst which the mists still played. We had hoped to sleep at the lonely Forester's Lodge at Pirio, but we were firmly refused admission. The last long level miles to the coast were lightened by the sudden clearance of the great peaks. The range of the Cinto and Paglia Orba towered up behind us in an enormous wall of red granite, its towers and ravines white with snow, the wild ledges of its fantastic buttresses fringed with inaccessible pine forests, its base buried in dark groves of evergreen oak. Twelve miles only distant from the beach the crest rises 9000 feet above sea-level.

We saw the mountains twice, first flushed with sunset, again early next morning casting long shadows over the foothills at their base. Hardly any sign of human habitation diversifies the foreground, the malaria is master of the shore and the mouth of the Fango, which flows, a clear brimming stream, through thickets of myrtles and white heaths to where the waves build up a barrier against it and hold back its waters in still pools shadowed by groups of poplars and eucalyptus. It is a noble landscape, that might make the fame of the painter who could enter into the spirit of its majestic yet melancholy beauty.

I conclude this fragmentary chapter with a few general remarks.

I found the climate on my first visit (at the end of June and beginning of July) most agreeable and invigorating. The dry, pungent air, the fresh sea-breezes, the stimulating alternations between light, if strong, sun-heat and a delicious shade temperature seemed to put more life into one in an hour than three months of east wind and North Sea on the healthiest spots of our own coasts. The sky was as a rule gloriously and perfectly clear, except on days when an afternoon shower gathered on the central range, which, like Ararat, is a great cloud-creator. Every winter sojourner on the coast of Provence has had opportunity to observe how above the white island in the blue breadth of sea there grows, as the day goes on, a white or golden island of cumulus cloud in the blue breadth of sky. This canopy, which sometimes hangs suspended high above the peaks till evening, sometimes breaks on them in rain and thunder, of course modifies the climate. Still the summer months are invariably fine. Once or twice, on asking "when the weather was likely to change?" I was told as a matter of course, "About the middle of September." Happy island, where American cyclones cease from troubling, and weather prophets have three months' rest! The sun's rays are intensely bright and keen, but the heat of the atmosphere is tempered by the constant breezes. In the shade, and at night, it was constantly fresh, and sometimes chilly. I started from Ajaccio at 5 A.M. on June 26, with a rug over my knees; ten days later I found, at 6 P.M., the wind on the pass between Bastia and St. Florent too cold to allow me, being heated by the ascent, to sit down with safety. The freshness we enjoyed probably partially disappears later in the season. But the climate appears to compare favourably with that of the mainland. On crossing to Tuscany, we found Florence baking under a temperature of 90°, and a few days later the much damper, electricity-charged warmth of the dolomitic region proved less conducive to activity than the dry brilliancy of Corsica. No one who can bear early summer in South Tyrol need fear it in Corsica. I mention these personal facts, because my evidence as to climate has been sometimes impugned on the ground that I have an abnormal and unnatural love of heat.

Corsica, though in a far less degree than Sardinia, is subject to fevers: even one part of Ajaccio has been ill spoken of. I was assured, however, that there the evil had been extirpated by planting and draining. But the plains of the eastern coast are poisonous from July to October, and it would be foolish to sleep in them after May. The rest of the island seems safe enough, although it must be remembered that in the south any spot surrounded by untilled or marshy soil may become dangerous at seasons when alternate wet and warmth draw up the exhalations of the soil. Spring or early summer is of course a far safer season than autumn.

The beauty of Corsican scenery can hardly be exaggerated. I know of no such combination of sea and mountains, of the sylvan beauty of the north and the splendour of southern forests with their red stems and fragrant undergrowth; no region in Europe where within so small a space Nature takes so many different sublime or exquisite aspects as she does in Corsica. Palms, cactus, and orange groves, olives, vines, maize, and chestnuts, the most picturesque beech forests, the noblest pine woods in Europe; granite peaks, snows and frozen lakes—all these are brought into the compass of a day's journey. Nor are they ranged in regular succession. Here the granite plunges in mountain masses upon the waves; there the chestnuts spread up to the height of 6000 feet on the rude crags of the central range. The atmosphere aids the scenery. The sun-suffused summer skies have a lucidity worthy of Athens herself, and the colours of land and sea a brilliancy which makes Italy look pale by comparison. Everything is as novel to the Alpine climber as if, in place of being on a fragment of the Alps, severed only by a hundred miles from their nearest snows, he was in a different continent. One difference he will regret, the apparent poorness of the mountain flora. This fact calls for an explanation. It may be found in the extreme dryness of the summer months.

In Corsica it is difficult to realise that Italy is the nearest land. What likeness there may be in details between Corsican and Italian scenery—and there is not so much as might be expected—in sentiment they have nothing in common. On the island we miss, or escape from, all historic associations, all artistic production. History, unless we go back to far-off colonisations or local struggles, is a blank; art hardly shows itself. There are no landscapes studded with cities of famous men. The far-apart villages, and still more the scanty cultivation, give an air of antique wildness to the valleys. You have but to get off a road—the roads are sorely out of keeping from the artist's standpoint, though in excellent repair from the traveller's—to feel yourself in the time of Cyclopes and lotus-eaters. The mariners still talk of all outside the Straits of Gibraltar with Homeric vagueness, and I heard one day an argument as to the shape of Africa which might have been held more than 2000 years ago by Phœnician mariners.

The mountaineer will discover in the island no impossibilities or problems in climbing requiring weeks or months to solve, but in the Cinto and Rotondo ranges plenty of rough scrambling, and, for nine months in the year, plenty of snow.

As for the people, I found them friendly and intelligent. The traveller landing from Italy will think them reserved in their greetings; the traveller from France may be surprised by their silence. But if their words are slow, their understanding and action is prompt; they treat the stranger honestly and with genuine goodwill. Every host, driver, or muleteer I met with was ready to do his best to comply with the somewhat out-of-the-way requisitions of an English traveller who was not a "milord" driving from his yacht at Bastia to his yacht at Ajaccio. Italian is, of course, the language of the country, but French, the official tongue, is employed in the newspapers and generally understood. The solitary traveller will generally be invited to join the mid-day or evening meal of the notables of the village, who frequently board at its principal inn, where he may pick up scraps of local politics. At Ste Marie Ziché I sat down with the mayor, the curé, the lieutenant of gendarmerie, the tax-collector, and a chemist sent by Government to counteract the phylloxera.

Local events linger on in the people's memory in a way which aids one to form a more definite idea of the origin and value of ancient history. The English occupation of 1794–1796, when George III. was actually proclaimed King of Corsica, is well remembered. We were told a story of an English detachment having been poisoned by roasting their dinners on spits of oleander wood! At Guagno, we found Homer bound in the parchment of an English settlement. The fights with the Greek colonists of Cargese are talked of as recent events, though 150 years old. Paoli's portrait—that of a quiet, good-looking gentleman with a pigtail, hardly suggesting Dr. Johnson's description of him as having "the loftiest port of any man he had ever seen"—hangs everywhere; and no Corsican fails to remind one that he is buried[1] in the cathedral church of London (meaning thereby Westminster Abbey).

Politics are always bitter in proportion as they are local, and the strife between Republicans and Bonapartists used to run high. Our innkeeper at Corte, and his wife, both lost their tempers because we had hired a Republican mule. There was much joking one day because the *chef-du-chant* had in the middle of the service suddenly refused to chant the "Domine, salvam fac Rempublicam," leaving the poor curé himself to supply the long word which stuck in his choir-leader's throat. "Et monsieur le curé faisait bien trembler la République, au moins dans sa voix," the story ended.

The suppression of religious orders was of course a topic of the day, and seemed generally approved of by the middle classes and disliked by the lower. "It is a noble thing to get rid of so much idleness," said a noisy young country-town official. But he did not receive with much favour my suggestion that in order to eradicate that disease in Corsica a serious government might do well to follow up the suppression of convents by that of cafés.

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[1] In fact, Paoli is buried in St. Pancras. His funeral cost £500. His monument only is in the Abbey.

The bandit is a thing of the past, except in the sense that a man occasionally takes to the bush after committing some offence against the laws. The traveller is absolutely safe throughout the island. At any station, however, he may (at least he might at the date of my last visit) interview a retired outlaw who had come down to see the train pass and enjoy the popularity resulting from a successful career in the bush. At another the train may be kept waiting while hired female mourners chant a dirge over a coffin on the platform. But the corpse will not represent a victim of violence. The traveller need be under no apprehension.

The tradition of the vendetta is still alive, and is perhaps something more than a tradition. It is hard, however, for a stranger to judge. If carried on at all, it is in a hole-and-corner way, and wholesale murder no longer darkens the mountain sides.

The best vendetta story I heard was from a driver at Vico. One of his brothers unluckily called a man of Bastelica a "Lucquois," which is as much as saying "an honest day-labourer," the grossest insult you can offer to the true-born Corsican. The insulted Bastelican, with his clan, consequently fell on my informant's brothers as they were driving their carts near Cauro, killing one and throwing the other for dead over a bridge. The wounded man lived only a few days. The reprisal, so I was told, consisted in the destruction of the Bastelican family, all except one child, who was still living. It was almost convincing when, as we passed two rude crosses by the roadside, our driver lifted his hat, saying, "There they lie, my poor brothers." But I confess to still suspecting that a legend of older days was (after a manner not unknown to Alexandre Dumas) being appropriated for my benefit by the story-teller.

A "bandit" was actually captured by the gendarmerie on the day of our passage through Orezza, and we heard his story from the lips of his captor on his return from the chase. It seems sufficiently characteristic of local manners to be worth re-telling.

The hero, of high repute as a herbalist in the countryside, had been called in to attend a married lady. The physician, despite his ripe age of sixty-two, unfortunately forgot his professional position and wrote odes instead of prescriptions. So far all was well, at least in the eyes of the law. But one day the sexagenarian lover discovered he had a rival of half his age. " Le mari n'était pour rien en tout ça," interposed the lieutenant who told the story. The passionate old profligate resolved on revenge, but happily for the younger man he, in his jealous fury, rammed two bullets instead of one down the barrel. The charge was insufficient to carry both, and the victim's back was peppered in place of being perforated.

The physician now felt obliged to take to the bush, where for a month he lived on what friends brought him, hearing, according to his own account, in every breeze the approach of justice or the vendetta. At last he could no longer resist paying a visit to his home. The lieutenant heard of it, and set off with his men. After a long night march through the chestnut groves they surrounded the house where the " bandit " lay. At this moment the rival he had wounded appeared on the scene with his gun, and begged the lieutenant not to interfere in an affair which was his to settle. He was soon sent about his business.

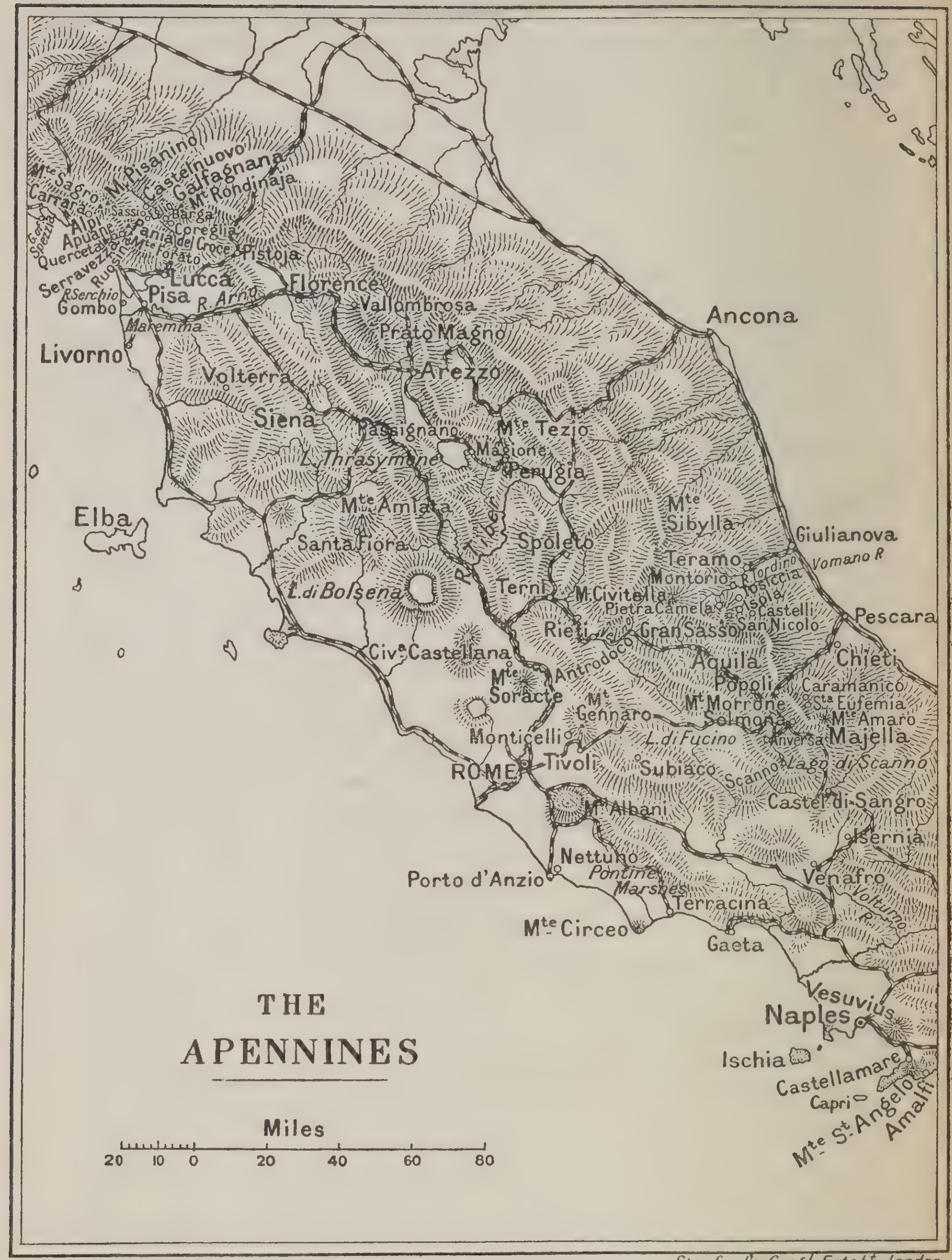
When the house was entered it was found that the " bandit " had barricaded himself in an inner room. While his daughters were imploring that he might be left a few moments to come out peaceably, a report was heard within. The door was at once burst open, and the old fellow discovered with a pistol beside him and a cup of poison at his elbow. He had grazed his ear, and swallowed his potion !

The lieutenant seemed from his own account to have been quite equal to the situation. He sent for a pail of milk, and made his prisoner drink till he was sick. He then marched him off to Stazzema. It should be added that the lieutenant thought his attempt at suicide unreal and carefully calculated for effect, to save his reputation from any slur his unresisted arrest might otherwise have cast on it. On the way the old fellow nearly succumbed to the effects of the poison or the cure, and only kept himself up by chanting his own verses to the Venus who was at the bottom of his misfortunes.

Next morning we heard him start, still singing, under escort for Bastia, whence, after a few weeks of seclusion, he might hope to be restored to the sympathy of his family and neighbours.

As to animals other than human, I can add little. A man may make a butcher of himself in Corsica, as elsewhere, and, I am told, obtain a more varied list of victims than in most places. One Frenchman, whom "Murray" has condemned to eternal infamy, included in his bag 155 blackbirds and two foxes! I did not see a *moufflon*, and I believe they are as hard to come at as bears in the Trentino. All the island breeds, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, are small and spare. The horses, however, are good to go, the sheep to eat, and the goats supply a very excellent white cheese.

The country inns in most parts of the island are excellent. They provide clean beds, and the local fare is abundant, wholesome, and good. Sardines, eggs, soup, red trout, a savoury dish of mutton and potatoes, and fruit—cherries or wild strawberries—is an ordinary dinner. The wine of the island is seldom sour, and often delicious. Old wine of the district should be asked for.



THE APENNINES

Miles
20 10 0 20 40 60 80
Mte Sagro
M. Pisanino
Castelnuovo
Galfagnana
Mt Rondinaja
Carrara
G. of Spezia
Alpi Apuane
Sassi
Barga
Coreglia
Pania del Croce
Mte Forato
Quercetta
Serravezza
Ruosina
Pistoja
Lucca
Pisa
R. Serchio
Gombo
R. Arno
Florence
Maremma
Livorno
Vallombrosa
Prato Magno
Arezzo
Volterra
Siena
Passignano
Mte Tezio
Magione
Perugia
L. Thrasymene
Elba
Mte Amiata
Santa Fiora
L. di Bolsena
Spoleto
Terni
Civa Castellana
Mte Soracte
Mt Gennaro
Monticelli
Tivoli
ROME
Subiaco
Mt Albani
Nettuno
Porto d'Anzio
Pontine Marshes
Mte Circeo
Terracina
Gaeta
Ancona
Mte Sibylla
Giulianova
Vomano R
Teramo
Montorio
R. Tordino
Tossiccia
Isola
M. Civitella
Pietra Camela
Castelli
San Nicolo
Gran Sasso
Rieti
Antrodoco
Aquila
Pescara
Chieti
Popoli
Caramanico
Sta Eufemia
Mt Morrone
Solmona
Mte Amaro
Majella
L. di Fucino
Anversa
Scanno
Lago di Scanno
Castel di Sangro
Isernia
Venafro
Volturno R.
Vesuvius
Naples
Ischia
Castellamare
Capri
Mte St Angelo
Amalfi

Stanford's Geog' Estab', London.

III

SKETCHES FROM THE APENNINES

1. THE PANIA DELLA CROCE

THE cities of Italy are of absorbing and endless interest. Nowhere does Art press so closely her rivalry with Nature. And Nature responds on the spot to the challenge. The charm of the lowlands is manifold and satisfying. To see panoramas you need not leave cities; largeness of scale, richness and variety of colour are the attributes of every view. One has no need, as too often in England, to sigh for an horizon on which it shall not be possible to count the trees.

Moreover, at Genoa, at Assisi, at certain seasons even at Rome, the hilltops glowing red and bare against a vapourless sky do not, on second thoughts, promise much either of beauty or adventure to those who feel a passing discontent at viewing them only as a background. This first impression is in the main justified. The centre and tops of the Apennines are, as a rule, less beautiful than their outskirts; they are bare and bleak without being sublime, and crowned by summits which resemble exaggerated downs rather than Alpine peaks. An Apennine journey planned, like a Swiss tour, on a "high-level" system might prove a mistake.

If, however, as a whole the chain is uninviting even to those who feel in a mood for a relaxation from art and antiquities, two at least of its mountain masses afford brilliant exceptions.

The "Alpi Apuane," better known to Englishmen as the Carrara Mountains, have, for their boldness and beauty of form and exquisite colouring, long been held dear by poets and painters. Ruskin made them the subjects of one of his eloquent panegyrics, and attributed to their influence on the people of whose daily horizon they form so conspicuous a feature no small share in the new birth of Tuscan art. From Pisa and Lucca, even from distant Volterra and Florence, their sharp, soaring crest catches the eye. Above the waters of the " soft blue Spezzian bay " they thrust themselves out of an unchanging belt of grey olive woods, a cluster of keen swordblades, in winter white with Alpine snows, in summer golden in the sunshine with the warm hues of weathered marble, purple in the shade with the rich bloom of a southern atmosphere.

Yet the only spot within them known to pleasure-travellers, and that but to few, is Carrara, the seat of the most famous modern quarries. The town lies deep in a green basin, in which several mountain-glens unite. Low fertile hills surround it, opening on the west to admit sea-glimpses and breezes, overhung on the east by the rude crags of the central mass of the " Alpi Apuane." Round the walls the slopes are rich in vines and orchards ; the snouts of red marble rock which overhang the torrent are covered with ferns, flowers, and mosses, and draped, in May, with a golden fringe of laburnum blossoms.

A walk of a mile or so towards the quarries suffices to change the scene. On turning the corner beyond the last village we enter a new region. A long, narrow glen opens in front, hemmed in on all sides by barren marble precipices. Huge white fans spread downwards from gashes in the red mountain side. These stone avalanches mark the position of the quarries. The glitter from the freshly exposed fragments of pure statuary marble is as unendurable to the eyes as any snow-slope. The savage nakedness of the scene is emphasised by the busy human life which fills it. The quarries seem a great penal colony, where men toil shut out from all the softness of life. Some compulsion, surely, must be at work to force these stalwart labourers to leave the pleasant haunts and works of their homes—the care of the olive and the vine, or the mending of nets by the seashore—for monotonous toil between a burning sun and shadeless crags. The miners would laugh at your pity. They are here because—although modern sculptors can for the most part only put the flimsiest thought into stone, and builders too often misuse what they take—marble is in good request and wages are high—so high that Carrara prospers and gains wealth, while the neighbouring villages can only manage to live from hand to mouth and pay taxes.

Of all views of the Carrara chain that from the beach of Gombo is the most exquisite. The road from Pisa leads across a flat, fertile plain, past a royal "cascina," or dairy-farm, through oak glades full of deer and pheasants, where one may meet a troop of camels, soberly plodding, and roped head to tail, like a file of gaunt mountaineers. Beyond the oak glades lies a broad belt of stone-pines. It is cut by long, grassy rides made for sportsmen, across which deer roam and rabbits scurry. At the end of the long avenue rises a bank of solid blue—the Mediterranean.

The sea is divided from the pines by a narrow beach, strewn with the tiniest and most delicate shells, and half-covered above winter-storm mark by high tufts of brown, feathery grasses and reeds. This seashore is one of the most beautiful spots in all Italy. Unlike most Italian landscapes, it owes little or nothing to man or classical associations. Victor Emmanuel had a small bathing villa and a large stable near at hand, but they are seldom occupied, and fortunately easily lost sight of. The only interruption to the solitude is when half-a-dozen tall, sunburnt fishermen launch a small boat and sail away across the ripples into the sunset.

Their craft is soon only as a bird on the waters ; and for lonely hours one may gaze on the double line of white foam and yellow sand stretching away for miles and miles to the mouth of the Magra and the low hills which enclose the Gulf of Spezzia. Behind the dark wall of pines which guards the shore and hides all the coast country the earth surges heavenwards in huge billows. Out of their rounded tops marble pinnacles shoot up with keener aspiration against the eastern sky. These crags rise nearly 7000 feet above our heads. Let not any reader be misled by the figures. Seven thousand feet is the height of Monte Rosa above the Riffel: the twenty-thousanders which enclose the central valleys of the Himalaya are not really any higher. Summer clouds—such as Shelley must often have watched—rest with folded wings on their shoulders. As the sun sinks opposite them the mountains are wrapt for a moment in every glory earth can catch. Then the glow fades off the chain, leaving it a mass of dark blue, lustrous at the base, where it is bathed in the rising mists of the lowlands. Only about the peaks there still lingers a subdued radiance which seems rather to issue out of them than to be a reflection from the sky.

In the centre rises a cluster of peaks; a solitary tower stands out clear at either end. The northern of the towers is the Monte Sagro; the southern the Pania della Croce, the Pietra Pana of Dante, whose mention of it is, I believe, the first in Italian literature. What Giotto's Campanile is to Florence this marble mount is to all Val d'Arno. Go where you will, its bold outline still rises against the horizon like some huge watch-tower. From the Carraja bridge its snows shine in winter mornings like bright gold, its rocks glow through autumn haze red as a carbuncle. There are slightly higher crests above the Carrara quarries, but for its prominence, isolation, and shapeliness the Pania[1] claims ever the first place in our minds when we remember the Apuan Alps. It is a landmark from Genoa to Florence, a beacon on the Tuscan sea as far as Corsica. It is natural to long to look down on the lands and seas below from a peak which forms a link between so many memories. If there is one hill in Italy which provokes and challenges ascent, it is the Pania.

From the station of Querceta, on the railway between Pietra Santa and Massa, a carriage road turns into the mountains. It leads through a narrow defile to Serravezza, a prosperous little town of nearly nine thousand inhabitants, lying about the meeting of the two torrents which combine to give it its name, and shut off from the plain by a chestnut-draped spine of rugged rock. Michel Angelo was forced by Leo X., very much against his will, to obtain marble in this neighbourhood instead of from Carrara, and lived some time in the town engaged in superintending the quarries opened under his directions on the Monte Altissimo, and in making them accessible by means of new paths. One of his letters records how he was nearly killed by the bursting of a fastening while moving a large column. According to a certain Ascanio Cordini, who wrote his life in 1746, he contemplated carving out of one of the hills a Colossus, which might be seen from far out at sea by sailors. The legend—it is nothing more—is, at least, a happy one. After the Italian fashion, a tablet marks the house he inhabited; another records the sojourn of Massimo d'Azeglio in 1840, and the fact that he here completed his novel, *Il Niccolo dei Lapi*.

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[1] The summits of the range are often designated collectively by Italians as "le Panie." The principal peaks have each, however, distinctive names of their own, and the Pania della Croce may be called simply "the Pania" without much fear of confusion.

We now followed the Serra, leaving on the left the Vezza, which falls from the flanks of Monte Altissimo—despite its name, only a lower spur of the chain. Beyond some large ironworks, at the hamlet of Ruosina, our driver turned up a narrow side-glen, where the road came abruptly to an end. About an hour's steady ascent through chestnut forests led to Levigliani, the highest-perched hamlet on this side of the mountains, which owes its size to the mercury and cinnabar mines opened near it in the days of the Medici.

In the hills near Levigliani are two large caverns, the "Tana dell' Uomo Selvatico," and the "Tana d' Eolo." The former is more than a mile long, and contains galleries, chambers, two streams, a lake, and stalactites of every form and description. Ropes are said to be necessary to explore it completely. The cavern of Aeolus, situated in the valley of Acereto, and so called from the blast of air rushing outwards from its mouth in summer, in winter in the opposite direction, is the most remarkable of all the caves. In some of them traces of human occupation are stated to have been found.[1]

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[1] The authority is Curo Regnoli's *Recherche paleoetnologiche nelle Alpi Apuane*, Pisa, 1847.

In so remote a spot one feels no right to expect anything but a hayloft. But the quarries, the caves, or the Pania bring an occasional stranger, and the owner of the village shop had a couple of spare beds to offer to guests. Neighbours dropped in for conversation and a glass of wine. One enquired of me as to the municipal government of London, another related how he had sailed as far as England and reached "Novicastel dovè *fa sempre notte*." I fear no Italian visitor in a Sussex public-house would be likely to meet with an equal display of interest and intelligence among its frequenters. The chief waiter of the establishment—he had two or three female subordinates—was a youth of remarkable conversational power. He combined with Italian volubility the German habit of saying everything two or three times over in order to make sure of his audience grasping it. His tongue, in consequence, was hard-worked. Nor was he active only with one member. His whole body was as restless as a child's, and our glasses were filled or our plates carried off before we had time to gather up enough Italian to breathe a remonstrance. We expected and half hoped that after all his exertions our friend might fall into a sleep sound enough to prevent his carrying out his proposal to come with us up the Pania—for the pleasure of our society. However, he was awake as soon as we were, and eager to carry a knapsack. It would have been cruel to refuse services volunteered with so much good grace, and, I truly believe, with little expectation of payment.

Three hours and a half suffice a good walker from the village to the top of the Pania della Croce. A well-paved path leads to the ridge dividing the glen of Levigliani from the head waters of the Serra. It is half an hour's nearly level walk over grass to the crest of the chain, the watershed between the Serchio and the western streams, at the base of the peak.

Here we halted to watch the sunrise break over the grey land and sea. We looked along the sides of Monte Forato, a rugged mass of rock which owes its name to a natural window in its crags, conspicuous from the coast. Beyond it, between us and Pisa, lay the broad upper basin of the

Versiglia, lifted up on the shoulders of the southernmost spurs of the range. The green slopes were everywhere varied by white hay-barns and villages. Even on the most remote meadow-shelves, or on the narrow crests of the highest spurs, hamlets had perched themselves, as if to catch the view and the sea-breezes. Their bells ringing for early mass, mingling with the voices of a multitude of cuckoos, sent up a cheerful sound through the bright morning air.

A goat-track leads up the lower portion of the marble pyramid ; above it offers a rough but easy scramble. In early May we found the highest crest a fine edge of snow.

The panorama of the Pania is bounded by two great horizon-lines, converging to the north, the sea and the central Apennine. Tuscany, " islanded with cities fair," lies underfoot. The distant hollow, flooded with morning sunshine, contains Florence and Pistoja ; on the high opposite hill to the southward sits Volterra of the Etruscan walls. Lucca appears as a dark patch among its olive gardens. Close to it—close, that is, in the scale of the vast prospect—the clustered marbles of Pisa shine out as the first sunbeams shoot over the Colline Pisane. On the edge of the land lies Leghorn, as English sailors are pleased to call Livorno. We have just seen the fire put out in its lighthouse.

The keen breeze which rushed about our peak fell also on the Mediterranean. The gusts swept wide shining paths across the grey waters. Caught by them, the white ships flitting out from port took in half their sails. As the sun climbed higher the air on the surface of the water seemed to seethe, sea mists curdled above the waves, sprang upwards and swam inland, like the mythic company of the Oceanides, blotting out for a time the towns and fertile fields of the coast-plain, and then melting again into thin air as they touched the mountain sides. Far out in the deep rose the lofty hills of Elba. Gorgona and Capraja were purple patches flecked by some far-shining human homes. Corsica's mountain tops ought to have fringed the western sky, but the horizon was too misty for us to distinguish them with any certainty.

Following the coast-line northwards, part of the Gulf of

Spezzia shone in blue calm, with Porto Venere—familiar to readers of *Elle et Lui*—guarding the entrance. Behind the hills of the Cinque Communi—famous for a wine grown in vineyards which overhang the sea, and are believed to draw virtue from its salt breezes—we looked far into and across the Gulf of Genoa to where the last spurs of the Maritime Alps fall seawards.

The mountain view consisted of the naked crags of the more northern Alpi Apuane, the Pisanino and its neighbours, and the long undulating ridge of the main Apennine with its rounded tops. Gripped between the two chains lay the broad valley of the Serchio. The landscape it offered to our eyes might have been the summary of Italy of a painter's dream. It had not the splendour of the southern slopes of the Alps, where grandeur, however buried in vines and chestnuts, lies always near at hand. This Val d'Aosta of the Apennines had a southern, sunny, calm aspect. A spreading, green veil covered the lowest slopes beside the stream. At a little height on the hillside it melted into dusky red, where the spring growths had not attained a luxuriance sufficient to cover the soil. Along the upper limit of the opened buds, where the two colours met, many little towns and hamlets stood out on the tops of the spurs. We recognised the walls of high-perched Barga, an unchanged specimen of a mediaeval hill-town with nothing new about it except the roads which zigzag up for miles to its gates. Loftier still, Coreglia clung on to the side of the Rondinaja. Broad stretches of winter snow left on high served to complete the national tricolour.

Over the whole shone the pure Italian heaven, and out of its heart the searching sun sent his rays, here veiling the slopes in a flood of quivering light, there giving an individual existence to every nook and corner of the hills. Unlike any Swiss panorama of snowy ranges, the prospect before our eyes came nearer in arrangement and mixture of sea and land to that from Snowdon, surpassing, however, our home mountain, in so far as Italy exceeds Wales in form, colour, and associations.

From the broad saddle west of the Pania a glen falls northwards into the valley of the Turrite Secca, which joins the Serchio at Castelnuovo, called "di Garfagnana," to distinguish it from other Italian Newcastles. A broad path skirts the north-western base of the Pania. Heavy snow avalanches had recently fallen down the gullies, cutting deep tracks through the luxuriant beech copses. The path turned down suddenly to cross the stream and gain Puntalto, the first hamlet on the eastern side of the mountains. Hence it would have led us back to the sources of the Turrite Secca in Val d'Arni, one of the most remote glens of this country. Its villages were formerly only to be reached by rude and almost dangerous ladder-paths down faces of marble cliff. Lately its mineral wealth has caused it to be linked to the seaside by a good road.

A goat girl pointed out to us the "strada della Pania," by which we had to make the circuit of the peak. It was a very slender footpath, with innumerable branches leading to charcoal-burners' platforms. It was impossible not to take a wrong turn sooner or later. We got too low, and to continue had to make our way along very steep wooded banks with cliffs above and below us. In many places to miss one's footing would have been fatal; and François' ironshod staff was serviceable. However, we recovered the proper track without serious loss of time. It keeps at a great height above the narrow gorge of the stream. The hillside was broken above us by bold rocks, below by steep cliffs; it was covered everywhere in a dense mantle of fresh green beech woods. On the opposite slopes, however, the chestnuts were still brown and bare. At length we turned the last spur of the Pania, and ran down gentian-starred banks on to a narrow hog's back crowned by a group of cottages. Instead of descending to the left to the bed of the Turrite Secca, throughout only a narrow defile, the path bears away in the opposite direction round the head of a tributary glen. A steep plunge and climb led to a meadow, white and fragrant with narcissus blossom, almost on the top of the ridge which looks down on the next valley to the southward—that of the Petrosciana.

Henceforth the path is a terrace cleverly carried at a level along a backbone of the hills at a height sufficient to avoid all trouble with their many spurs. We turned at last downwards towards the twin villages of Sassi and Eglio, where whitewashed houses with gardens full of flowering shrubs and plaster statues reminded us we were in the heart of Italy. The wayside shrines were gaily decked with jonquils or narcissus blossoms, varied by a bunch of lilac or a dark-blue wreath of gentians. By making May the Virgin's month the Roman Catholic calendar has firmly attached the old flower festival to the Christian creed. One at least of the old goddesses lingers on earth, and having somewhat carelessly disguised herself remains among us immortal as spring itself.

From these heights the views over the Garfagnana were enchanting. The universal sunshine lit up its high towns and hamlets, and streamed into the hollows of its crumpled hills, throwing out their spurs in relief against a background of golden air. A sharp, sandy zigzag led us down to Castelnuovo. This remote country town lies across the junction of two streams at the foot of a broad hill, the end of the spur we had been pursuing, which here projects towards the main Apennine, so as almost to block the Serchio valley. In the background the snowy range of the Alpe di San Pellegrino[1] rises beyond a broad fertile basin, celebrated for its pure air and healthiness in summer and its cold in winter.

Entering the town we enquired of a peasant who was loitering on the old bridge over the Turrite Secca for the best inn. He suggested a house which did not on nearer approach look inviting, and I thought it prudent to take other advice before committing ourselves. There was no want of advisers at hand, for the day was cloudless, and all the business of the town was being carried on "sub Jove" on the shady side of the street. Hammers clinked on brass, wheelwrights knocked, shoemakers tapped, tailors stitched, children sprawled and cried, and through all ran a buzz of conversation varied by a laughing appeal to the dark-haired girls who sat stitching under shelter of their blinds on the opposite balcony. Italians are only at home out of doors. They work as naturally as others play in the sunshine. We decided to appeal to the shoemaker, and he recommended us the house with the balcony opposite. It was a thorough country inn, with a large kitchen out of all proportion to the work done in it, and a high stone staircase, leading to a little sitting-room with a very ancient Empire clock and patriotic prints, amongst them a Victor Emmanuel in royal robes, looking mightily uncomfortable, and like a king in private theatricals. The young mistress soon gave us a sufficiently good dinner. Having engaged a carriage, we strolled about the place.

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[1] Many of the Apennines are known as "Alpi," and the Cimone, the highest of the Tuscan ridges, is also called the "Alpone" or "great Alp" by the shepherds. In the Apennines it is the crests, in the Alps the lower shoulders of the range, which are locally called "Alpi." In both cases, it will be noticed, it is the part of the chain which affords pasturage which gets the title.

The "città" boasts its hospital and its "elegantissimo teatro," besides a large church containing some good della Robbia work. The "new castle" has in the process of years become a very rusty old fort, and is now used as a granary and Monte di Pietà.

A high-flown inscription in the picturesque street records the governorship of Ariosto, sent here to his great disgust in 1522. Considering the terms in which the poet spoke of their ancestors as "questa gente inculta," this shows some large-mindedness and absence of family pride on the part of the Castelnuovans. The poet thus describes the spot:

> La nuda Pania tra l' Aurora e il Noto,
> Dall' altre parti il giogo mi circonda
> Che fa d' un Pellegrin la gloria noto.
> Quest' è una falda ov' abito profonda,
> D' onde non muovo i piè senza salire
> Del selvoso Apennin la fiera sponda.

And he goes on to deplore the tales of

> Furti, omicidii, odo, vendette ed ire,

to which in his official capacity he had to listen. At the present day the people are peaceable, polite, and—if I may judge by their bookseller's window—cultivated enough even for a poet's society.

In quantity the literary food displayed was not, perhaps, equal to an English country bookseller's stock, but the quality was certainly superior. In provincial England we seldom see an old author. Here the classics held their own. Tacitus, Lucretius, and Homer represented the ancients; Tasso, Alfieri, and Machiavelli, with Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, the Middle Ages; the only modern admitted was a translation of Dickens's *Christmas Carol*.

I had intended to spend ten days in the Carrara Apennines, to recross to Massa by the mountains, and to explore their northern flanks. By the second week in May I had counted on finding the hillsides fully clothed. But although at Castelnuovo all was green, and the copses were already gay with laburnum blossoms, 500 feet above the chestnut woods were only in bud. Without their woods the bright and many-winding glens of the Tuscan Apennines look bare and parched. The brown ribs of the earth are not clothed, like a Swiss Alp, in turf watered by perennial springs. But in full summer and through autumn the ruddy soil contrasts finely with the green cloak thrown over it. The foliage, too thin to conceal any crease in the hillsides, sets off their variety of shape and emphasises each bold line or graceful curve of the mountain spurs. Contrasted to northern forests the woods of the Apennines are as the clinging intricately-waved drapery wrought by some Greek master-sculptor's hand to the simpler and heavier handiwork of a Michel Angelo.

The wise traveller pays as much attention to time as to place. He is most reluctant to be "out of season" in his wanderings, and takes pains to see every country at its best and most characteristic moments. With regard to Italy, it would not be difficult to argue that tourists are as a rule the reverse of wise.

In winter, life in Italy is at a stand-still. The first frost-laden "tramontana" puts an end to out-of-door existence, wraps up all the men in their great cloaks, and sends the women shivering indoors to their little pots of charcoal. But under its wings it bears another crowd to fill the streets. Americans in families, English in pairs, Germans unattached, all the Hyperborean tribes from behind the Alps pour down the passes. One finds in the Pitti more fellow-countrymen than Florentines, and, what with the crowd and the copyists, can only get near the great pictures once a week for a few hours on Sunday morning. In place of the Campagna peasantry who crowd St. Peter's in May, rubbing their faces fondly against the saint's bronze toe, there is a buzzing of personally-conducted troops, whom even the most polite and genial of pontiffs could scarcely pretend to mistake for angels. No processions of tall peasants and oxen dragging carts, out of which the unfermented grape-juice oozes and drips, slowly scale the high hill of Perugia, but between the trains shivering tourists with hands buried deep in their pockets and noses as red as their guide-books rush in and out of the icy town.

If you care for this company, and like being cold, and wish to see Italian towns and country in their least characteristic aspect, by all means travel in winter. At every time the country is rich in delights. But if you want to enjoy them in the most delightful way, remember that there are three months both of spring and autumn when Italy is itself again; when the sun-blinds come out and the stalls under the old palaces are piled with flowers or ripe fruit; when the olives get a new meaning amongst the fresh green leaves; when the huge well-like churches, where you nearly caught your death of cold, become pleasant resting-places from the buzz and glitter of the outside street, and their faded frescoes shine out upon you with a wealth of detail and expression unrevealed by low December suns. Spring and autumn are undoubtedly for strangers the best seasons in Italy, but it is difficult to prefer one before the other.

Spring comes to England

> Pale, and a maiden, and sister to sorrow,

gathering her faint-coloured robes round trembling limbs, decked with buds half opened, yet already nipped by cruel frosts, and trailing a garland of wind-tossed, weather-beaten daffodils. She has a sweetness and a meekness under suffering which makes poets long for her, even while they linger under the spell of her southern sister. An Italian *Primávera* bursts upon us in frank, flaming beauty, gliding over the hills unhooded, with breasts bare to the sunshine, like Venus of old. The earth is her temple, and under its sky-roof of stainless blue she fears no cold or storm. She bears in her hand for sceptre a tall shoot of maize, the young, grey-green corn waves about her knees, and from her shoulders trail long, delicate vine-tendrils. Before her feet the Campagna spreads a carpet of blood-red poppies; in the hedgerows which have been blooming timidly all the winter, "the roses grow rosier" at her approach. Over the mountain-crags and the mountain-like ruins she throws a shower of pink and yellow blossoms; in the fields of Val d' Arno the Florentine lily shoots up amongst the corn-blades, under the great oaks of the Alban hills the cyclamens come forth in thousands at her call. The sun does her children double service, sending down through the long May days fresh streams from the snows of the Apennine to refresh and sustain them under his rays.

Autumn in Italy is borne down and overgrown with fruitage and vegetable wealth. Then the luxuriance of the year is at its height, grasses wave their loftiest crests, the vines spread their amplest shade. Long after England has lost its crops, and seen its blossom moulder, and its dripping woods grow brown with moisture, the Apennine is still, Bacchante-like, girdled round with grape-clusters, and clothed with oak copses and chestnut forests green as in June. In the south autumn is a riper summer—the season of mature life, not of gathering damps and incipient decay. There the year does not, as with us, die away slowly and sadly in a long decline. Even in late October there is little sign of the approaching fall; a sense of mellow ripeness alone pervades the air. It is a feeling more in harmony with the human associations of the country, its grey towers and time-worn ruins, than the bright, youthful promise of spring; and we may feel tempted to prefer the autumn for our rambles.

Yet spring has practical advantages for the traveller. A fresh breeze breaks through its fiercest sunshine. There are long days, cool nights, and no mosquitoes. Autumn suffers from sirocco and stinging insects. From the latter pest, however, the hills and hill-towns—such as Siena and Perugia—are free; the former is felt in them in a very modified form.

I had intended to spend more time in the mountains; but, with all Italy before us, it seemed perverse to loiter in the one region where the finger of spring had as yet only touched the flowers, leaving the woods still wintry. So we turned southwards, putting off the Pistojan Apennine to the June or October of another year.

Before I close the chapter and carry any hill-lover who cares to follow me to the far-off heights of the Abruzzi I must seize the occasion to suggest to him half-a-dozen pleasant diversions from the beaten track in Central Italy.

Milton has given the name of Vallombrosa a musical charm for English ears, and Wordsworth in somewhat feeble verse has recorded his visit to the Convent. Story, the American sculptor, made the Medicean villa Al Lago, a mile or two distant, his summer retreat and published a pleasant account of the neighbourhood.

Wordsworth described, in prose, the situation with perfect accuracy: "I had expected as the name implies a deep and narrow valley overshadowed by enclosing hills, but the spot where the Convent stands is, in fact, not a valley at all but a cove or crescent open to an extensive prospect. In the strangers' book I read the notice in the English language that if any one would ascend the steep ground above the Convent and wander over it he would be abundantly rewarded by magnificent views. I had not time to act on this recommendation, and only went with my young guide to a point nearly on a level with the site of the Convent that overlooks the vale of the Arno for some leagues."

I found leisure to follow out the recommendation of the unknown Englishman which the poet in a hurry preserved, if he did not profit by it. Even from the point Wordsworth reached, "some leagues" is a very inadequate description of the view. It extends down the Arno valley as far as the peaks of Carrara. But a fair walker will pursue his way along the top of the crest that embays the Convent till he reaches the foot of a steep hillside, and after a climb of 2000 feet finds himself on the brow of the well-named Prato Magno, a noble Apennine which stretches for miles, filling the space within the horseshoe formed by the middle and upper valleys of the Arno and overlooking the Casentino to the *gran giogo* of the Central Apennine. The views in every direction are worthy of the heart of Italy. Westwards and in the direction of Arezzo lies a strange district of bare slate hills weather-worn into fantastic shapes which recall—and probably suggested—some of the strange backgrounds of the Early Florentine Masters. When morning mists are mixed up with the serrated ridges the effect becomes extravagant, and would certainly be reckoned so in a picture.

The return to the Convent may be shortened by following a horse-track, a furrow filled in the first days of November knee-deep with the brown leaves of the beech-woods. The pine forest which immediately surrounds the Convent is an exotic introduced by the monks, and does not agree with the scenery as well as the chestnut and beech-woods native to the spot. Italians, however, find much charm in its singularity and presumed healthiness.

Many of the sojourners in the hill-city of Perugia must have noticed from its northern gate a bald double-crested summit, often powdered with snow in winter or spring. A map will show that this is Monte Tezio (3230 feet), the highest point of the range, the Montes Cortinenses of Livy,[1] that separates the Upper Tiber valley from Lake Thrasymene. The walk to it—about seven hours there and back—is varied and interesting and its isolation makes the mountain one of the best view-points in Central Italy. There is not much difficulty in finding the way—there is a choice—so long as you keep near the crest of the hills and avoid the tracks leading down into their eastern glens. The paths run from farm to farm through thick coppice, or among hedgerows and chestnut woods. The final ascent is about an hour's steady trudge. It is repaid by a wide panorama. In the foreground lies the broad mirror of Thrasymene; the vale of the Clitumnus with its towns and villages stretches towards Spoleto; the courses of the Tiber and Arno are visible almost from their cradles to the sea; Soracte and the Pania bound the view south and north.

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[1] Several historical writers have assumed that by this phrase Livy meant to indicate only the hill on which Cortina stands. The plural surely suggests that it includes the range of which that hill forms part. If this is assumed, one of the chief difficulties in locating the battle of Lake Thrasymene is avoided. I am glad to find my own view that it was fought between Passignano and Magione has the support of a military commission.

The top of Monte Tezio is a down pastured by heifers. A ring-like and apparently artificial trench encircles the highest mound. The same feature is noticeable in the top of the Mount of Transfiguration in Perugino's fresco in the Sala del Cambio at Perugia. Whether the coincidence is an accident or a reminiscence, may be left to the curious art-critics.

The most conspicuous hill between Tuscany and the Tiber is Monte Amiata (5650 feet), which rises south of Siena close to the old road to Rome. An extinct volcano, it has the fine lines characteristic of this class of mountains. It can easily be climbed, or still better, encircled. The small towns in its middle zone are connected by a series of by-roads that enable a visitor to Siena to make the complete tour of the mountain in his motor car in a summer day. For the quick succession and variety of the views obtained the drive would be hard to beat. The Tuscan coast and Maremma give place to the lakes of Bolsena and Thrasymene as the moving panorama unrolls itself beneath the traveller's eyes. At Santa Fiora, a village used by Italians as a summer resort, he will find lunch or a bed—and some fine della Robbia work.

In April 1893, I strolled up through the wind-beaten ilex grove that clings on the highest slope of Soracte and found a direct way down its slopes to Civita Castellana. A few days later I sought shelter from the keenest of tramontanas on the lee side of the stone pyramid that crowns the brow of Monte Gennaro (4165 feet), the loftiest curve of the hills that rise behind Monticelli on the verge of the Roman Campagna. From the last railway station before Tivoli a pleasant road skirts the hills to the point where a steep gully breaks their slope. At the top of a long and toilsome ravine the stony track reaches the *Pratone*, a broad upland situated behind the sky-line seen from Rome. Open glades, smooth lawns of flowery turf, lie sheltered between slopes clothed in hollies and beech copses and brightened by starry narcissi. In this pastoral homely region the herdsmen have their summer folds and shelters. Here they abide, changing little themselves and hardly caring for the changes of the outer world, while just beyond from the bounding ridges to which they climb for freshness in the August heats a wide prospect opens over the green and red plain, along the shining reaches of the stream that divides it and past the brown blot and the grey bubble in its centre to the sea spaces and the sunset. They look over Latium, along the Tiber past Rome and St. Peter's. But they are concerned not so much with the signs of the times as with those of the weather. The march of armies, the processions of pilgrims, are beneath their range of vision, or seem no more than a passing dust cloud ; they notice only that the Campagna no longer stretches as an unbroken green carpet to the walls of Rome, that great stripes of bare red soil show that it is coming again under cultivation and that the rising sun strikes the raw white blocks of a new city by the Tiber side. A day in their haunts is a refreshing interlude in a visit to Rome and a welcome return to Nature for the jaded student of art-galleries.

The view from Monte Gennaro is not a panorama. Eastwards towards Subiaco spreads a maze of brown buttresses and snowy ridges. The rare visitor turns his back on the Apennines to look north, south, and west on the lowlands and coast-lines, to identify the Alban Mount, Soracte, Monte Circeo, and Monte Amiata with its brown girdle of leafless chestnut woods and its spring cap of snow, to trace the limits of the early Roman State and the sites of the cities of its Etruscan foes.

My next tramp was from Terracina, as picturesque and out-of-the-world a town as can be found even in Italy, across the Pontine marshes to the observatory perched on one of the summits of the Circean Mount, the "all-but-island" which is so conspicuous on the southern horizon from the

Alban hills. Its slopes are in April a garden of spring flowers: cystus bushes, cyclamen, violets, asphodel. From this point of vantage the traveller may survey all that lies between Vesuvius and the Ciminian Mount. His eyes range round the curve of the flat sands and lagoons to Nettuno and Porto d' Anzio; opposite stands the white crag of Anxur and beyond it the rugged coast, headland behind headland, stretches south towards Gaeta and Ischia.

The last of my excursions on lesser hills in Italy that I mention here was the ascent of Monte St. Angelo, the highest crag in the promontory of Sorrento. One may start either from Amalfi or Castellamare. It is by far the best walk near Naples and there is a possibility of rock-climbing among the peaks. The view of the two bays and the islands is of its kind unsurpassable. I saw nothing of brigands, but enjoyed a lunch on polenta with some friendly woodcutters on one of the higher ridges of the mountain.

2. The Gran Sasso d' Italia

It is impossible to deny that to most men in the Middle Ages the Alps suggested ideas of physical discomfort and disgust. In the popular creed ice shared with flame, " many a frozen " with " many a fiery Alp," the honour of supplying scenery for the Inferno. One of our old ballads puts it plainly:

> "O, whatna mountain is yon," she said,
> "Sae dreary with frost and snow?"
> "O, yon is the Mountain of Hell," he cried,
> "Where you and I must go."

Our century has changed all this only too thoroughly. Many ladies nowadays would accept with pleasure the ghosts' programme and offer to start at once for the " Pic d'Enfer." The danger for our summer tourists is rather lest, by a too exclusive devotion to snow and ice, they should imitate, while they reverse, their fathers' narrowness. Has not the time come when even the Alpine Club may look back to what in the natural enthusiasm of discovery it left behind for a time, and remember that its true scope is to widen, not to narrow, our love of Nature? May not its members be now and then allowed an Apennine?

The Apennines are not Alps; but their scenery has a character and beauties of its own. The wider valleys display the most romantic landscapes. On the nearer spurs the oak woods and vine terraces lie fold upon fold, broken here and there by the grey walls and towers of a mediaeval "città," or the whiteness of some vast half-deserted villa shining out between the dark spires of the cypresses, which gather like mourners round its faded splendour. Under the glowing sky where it spreads its vast arch to a distant horizon the mountains rise range behind range, amber or dark blue in the sun, as they are bare or forested, with a circlet of golden light left by winter on their broad foreheads.

The higher glens, infinitely winding, present at every turn in fresh combinations the charming features of southern hill-scenery, steep slopes muffled in chestnut-woods, broken crags draped with laburnums, glades bright with cyclamen and overhung by rugged brows, each capped with its "castello" or fortified hamlet, whence a long staircase, hollowed out of the rocks by the daily tramp of many generations, descends to the high-pitched bridge over the white stones and the dancing stream.

But the crests, some one may object, are surely tame; the summits make no pretension to Alpine grandeur, and do not vie in grace of form and grouping with the hills of Wales or Cumberland, far less with the perfect mountain forms of Greece. With some notable exceptions this criticism holds good. Yet it is worth while to gain the long flowery ridge which commands on one side the plain of the Po and the whole semicircle of the Alps, on the other Tuscany down to Monte Amiata; or to climb a crag whence the eye ranges over the sweeping coast-line of the Gulf of Genoa and across the sea-spaces to the mountain-tops of Corsica, which rise, shining apparitions, beyond the watery edge of the curving globe. Admit that the air of the Apennines has not the reviving strength of the Riffel; every constitution does not require the strongest form of tonic, and there is for many sufferers from English mists a healthy charm in the dry hill atmosphere and sun of Italy.

I have already described a ramble among the marble peaks of Carrara. My present goal is the more remote summit in the heart of the Abruzzi, the king of all the Apennines, the Monte Corno or Gran Sasso d' Italia.

On the bridges at Florence or from the road to Fiesole, the Pania della Croce makes its presence felt. Its keen outline was faithfully rendered in Leighton's illustrations to *Romola*. I would willingly believe the common report that the Gran Sasso d' Italia forms part of the familiar sky-line which girds with a belt of blue, studded in early spring with flashing snow-jewels, the Roman Campagna. But I must confess that I put no faith whatever in this tradition, incorporated though it has been in many books. Between Rome and Aquila stands a great block of mountain sufficient to hide all beyond and behind it. One of its summits has probably been allowed to pass itself off as the King of the Apennines. Whether, however, it be visible from St. Peter's or not, the distance of the Gran Sasso from Rome is not formidable—about seventy-five miles as the crow flies.

From Italian sources we learn that the mountain found its De Saussure in a certain G. Bernardino Delfico. His account of his ascent of the peak, apparently the first, made in 1794, was originally published at Naples in 1812, in a work entitled *Dell' Interamnia Pretuzia.* Signor Delfico was not of those who "si espongono a tali pene solo per poterlo dire e goder qualche momenti di una ampia veduta"; he measured the mountain and got for it a height of 10,207 English feet. Like, however, many amateur measurers, he went wrong a matter of 500 feet, and the Gran Sasso has since had to renounce its pretensions to the five figures which used to be accorded it in some of the best English atlases and textbooks. Signor Delfico's account, though indulging mildly in horrors, is, considering the date, singularly to the point. It is illustrated by some charmingly simple plates of the pre-Alpine art-period, in which the lower hills appear as rounded knobs, like the bluffs above Dorchester familiar to Oxford men, while the Gran Sasso itself rises with perfectly smooth steep sides in the background. In those days to represent mountains cartographers thought it sufficient to place a few sugar-loaves behind a good many plum-puddings, and accurately draw the result.

In the old carriage-road from Terni to Aquila there are three natural stages : the steep ascent from Terni, the long mountain valley to Antrodoco, and the high pass over the watershed of Italy. The first stage offers a succession of exquisite views. From the road, a steep terrace cut in rocks, powdered in May-time with the gold of broom-branches and sprinkled with white cistus blossom, the eye looks down on the bowl-shaped vale of Terni, its campanili and tree-tops floating in semi-transparent haze and ringed in by a circle of bare brown hills.

Above the famous waterfall lies the green upper valley of the Velino, rich in hawthorns and tall poplars. Behind the foliage a broad-shouldered Apennine, transfigured in shining raiment of winter snow and morning mist, lifts itself against the pure vault, tall and luminous as some mighty Alp.

At the inn at Rieti, a framed sheet on one of the walls recording the names of the " Samnites and Umbrians," who had fallen in the last wars of Italian independence, mingled strangely ancient and modern history. The Italian mind, however progressive, likes to look back to its pedigree. The Mayor of Albano having one day to call on his fellow-townsmen to welcome Garibaldi, addressed them as " citizens of the most ancient city of Latium."

As far as Antrodoco it is a pleasant and, in parts, picturesque drive up a valley which grows gradually narrower and less fertile. But the pass across the central Apennine fully deserves Hare's description of " most dreary." As the road climbs upwards the hillsides become bare, while no fine mountain forms break the monotony of the landscape.

The top of the pass is a long mountain-girt plain without distant view. In the centre stands a solitary post-house. The scenery is exactly suited to form a background to brigands. I must confess that when I saw a party of seven or eight roughly dressed men, with guns slung across their shoulders, advancing to meet the coach, I felt a momentary fear that the picture was about to be completed by being supplied with incident. A small brass number which shone on their approaching wideawakes at first suggested escaped convicts. My companion, however, at once calmed my fears by remarking that they were "cantonieri." The road-menders in the southern provinces had in places been armed for the better protection of the highways.

The first view into the interior of the Abruzzi[1] is both a surprise and a disappointment. The impression received is that one has crossed, not the Apennine, but the Mediterranean, and is in some barren province of Asia. It is difficult to believe oneself still in the heart of beautiful Italy, for in front stretches

> Another, greater, wilder country,
> That's one vast, red, drear, burnt-up plain.

The presence of man is marked only by scanty cultivation, and here and there a deserted fortress or a dingy stone-built hamlet. Near at hand are ruddy mountains on which, even in May, the snow lies in heavy streaks. Away in the east is another dull line of "bare hills which seem to be shaven by the sun."[2] Such a range is common enough in Armenia. But there it only adds by contrast to the magnificence of one mighty mountain. The poor tent-shaped projection above the main ridge pointed out as the Gran Sasso is no Ararat.

In truth the highest Apennine seen from this side is a mean thing. But I did not yet despair of it. Italians are not in the habit of conferring utterly inappropriate names, and would scarcely have given the titles of "The Great Rock of Italy," and "Mount Horn," to a shapeless down. I had studied Edward Lear's striking drawings, and knew that from some points, at any rate, the mountain made a very different show. Besides, I had learnt from maps that the Gran Sasso lay off the main chain. We had only a glimpse of the highest crest across an intervening ridge. It is unfair to take away a mountain's character on the strength of so slender an acquaintance.

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[1] "The Abruzzi" is correct, because the word stands for the three provinces of Abruzzo Citeriore (capital Chieti), Abruzzo Ulteriore Primo (capital Téramo), Abruzzo Ulteriore Secondo (capital Aquila).

[2] Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy*, 1670.

Aquila presently came into sight on our right, a wide-spreading grey city. On close approach the town accords with the Eastern air of the surrounding landscape. The ruinous walls enclose as much garden-ground and waste-land as buildings. The churches and "palazzi" are separated by hovels, so that it requires a careful inspection to discover the few fascinating scraps of Gothic, the leavings of war and earthquakes, which partially redeem the generally mean aspect of the place.

Our arrival was, for our comfort, ill-timed. Only a day or two before the new line linking the capital of Abruzzo Ulteriore to the Adriatic railway had been opened for traffic. The outward appearance of Aquila might not have led a stranger to suspect the existence of any "pent-up stream of life" in the dull old town. The cataract which had now burst forth must, I think, have astonished even the oldest inhabitant. Every inn was brimful; military bands occupied the squares; schoolboys from neighbouring towns were making tours of the churches; quacks and conjurers displayed their rival arts at every corner; placards in letters large enough to be read in the moon announced an opera of Verdi's nightly It was a real awakening, and if some of the rejoicers seemed to reel somewhat on their way homewards—a rare sight in Italy—it was only charitable to remember that the sleep of Aquila had lasted for more than a hundred years.

Having obtained a promise of two beds in a sitting-room at the second-best inn, we strolled out, guided by a bootblack, the only "cicerone" at hand, to see the sights.[1] As we left Santa Maria di Collemaggio, which stands outside the town, the sun had just sunk below the horizon. The by day bare hills around were wrapped in transparent robes of grey and purple. Far away southwards the snows on the huge bulk of the Majella glowed like a burning coal through the tremulous waves of blue air. Aquila seen thus at its best has a wild, fierce fascination ; but it is not a beauty I should care to seek a second time.

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[1] The beautiful works of art in the churches have been sufficiently described by Murray and Hare in *Days near Rome.*

We returned through the noisy streets to our inn and a good supper. The whole of the night before at Terni I had been kept awake by the perpetual din of the carters in the piazza. Now the hour for revenge seemed to have come. Scarcely, however, were our eyes closed when a clatter in the loggia outside mixed with our dreams and soon broke them. A large entertainment had just begun. Any reader who has had experience in undergraduate days of a " bump " supper in the next room may form a fair idea of our chances of sleep. Until daylight the company feasted, toasted, and finally danced. The existence of the railway was our solitary consolation for all the consequences it had brought with it. For fear of missing the early train at six, an omnibus started at half-past four A.M. We astonished Aquila by calmly breakfasting and setting out an hour later for the ten minutes' drive to the station. Such conduct was looked on as disrespectful to the new line.

The old road from Aquila to Solmona crossed a high hill and passed through Popoli. The railway follows the gorge of the Aterno. Red rocks crowned by grey nest-like villages hang over the water. The engineering difficulties overcome would be remarkable on any but an Italian line. They were a source of much satisfaction to our fellow-travellers—a party of Abruzzi farmers. These men were a curious contrast to the typical northern agriculturist. Quick-witted, curious, talkative, without either shyness or self-assertion in their manner, they entered at once into conversation with foreigners as if an English traveller was a common companion in an Abruzzi public conveyance.

At a station on a wide green meadow a road branches off across the mountains to the fertile plain which was once Lago di Fucino. Then the gorge again contracts, before the line finally issues from its tunnels and galleries between the walls of rock, and with a wide curve sweeps on to the plain of Solmona, commanding a view of unexpected beauty. Again I must go to the East for a comparison. We were reminded of the approach from Anti-Libanus to Damascus, with the difference that here a bare range in the distance takes the place of desert haze. Lying in a broad open space between the hills, and abundantly fed by mountain streams, the fields and orchards round Solmona teem with the glorious fertility born of the perpetual union of sun and moisture. Here, as when Ovid praised his native place,

> Hinds in brooks the running waters bring,
> And cool gales shake the tall trees' leafy spring:
> With corn the earth abounds, with vines much more,
> And some few pastures Pallas' olives bore.[1]

The town has a statue of its poet and some old Gothic fragments. It also, when I was last there, boasted an incongruous innovation in a "bootshine" boy, fresh from New York, with a fine American accent.

The chief excursion from Solmona is a charming drive up a narrow defile to the Lago di Scanno, a clear tarn embedded in green bare hills like one of the lesser Cumberland lakes. It gives birth to a stream which lingers in deep pools of amazing colour and transparency, alive with splendid trout whose every motion is visible to the passer-by through the clear waters. Above the lake is Scanno, a remote village, the inhabitants of which still wear a peculiar and picturesque costume. In E. Lear's day it was one of the most remote spots in Italy, only accessible on mule-back; now it boasts a fair inn, a carriage-road, and even a motor omnibus which meets the trains at Anversa, a station above Solmona.

A longer excursion is the ascent of the Majella, best made from Caramanico. This village boasts a Gothic church built in 1474 by "Blume di Lubecca." An Italian visitor tells us that as the traveller walks along the steep streets, his eye is caught at every moment by a "beautiful window or small pillar planted, like a flower in the desert, on the rough walls of the modern houses." The Majella is the second in height of the whole Apennine chain, but it has not the remarkable boldness of outline which makes the Gran Sasso so conspicuous among Italian mountains. According to local writers, the glens round its base are full of picturesque forest scenery.

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[1] Ovid's *Elegies*, Marlowe's Translation. There are some charming sketches of Solmona in E. Lear's *Illustrated Excursions in Italy*.

The ascent of Monte Amaro (8953 feet), the highest point of the range, passing Santa Eufemia, is called an expedition of fourteen hours, including the return to Caramanico. To an active Englishman it would probably prove much less. A tempting walk is the pass over Monte Morrone, a spur of the Majella to Solmona; there must also be fine paths across the hills to Chieti.

The Majella is rich in historical associations. From its hermitage, the Badia di Santo Spirito, Pier da Morrone was dragged to the papal throne, his relinquishment of which exposed him to Dante's scorn. Hither also came an illustrious fugitive of whom the monkish chroniclers make no mention, Cola di Rienzi flying from the nobles of Rome. A shepherd's cabin on the mountain gave shelter to Tasso escaping from the persecution of Alfonso d' Este.

Solmona is also the starting-point of a cross-country railroad to Naples, which carries the traveller through some of the most varied and beautiful scenery in Central Italy. A few miles from the town the line begins to wind and mount, bending in wide zigzags, so as to command glorious views of the rich vale it has left below backed by the twin peaks of the Gran Sasso. Still the train climbs higher and higher until at a level of 4000 feet, as high as that of the St. Gotthard tunnel, it gains a bleak upland where the snow is apt to rest till nearly midsummer. Stern stone-built villages are perched on the hillsides and near the stations stand a few incongruous modern houses, indicating that the Neapolitans have discovered that these uplands may serve as a health resort as well as a sheep-pasturage. Soon the line descends again and circles in long curves before it plunges down to the remote vale of Castel di Sangro. A further ascent leads into a rustic region of broken hills and woods which lasts until we come to a halt at the station of Isernia. The town rises in the foreground of a landscape which, if the traveller is fortunate in his weather and light, will remind him of one of Turner's noblest Italian landscapes.

There is nothing wanting to complete the picture nor is there any incongruous object to mar its effect. The distant arches of a lofty viaduct complete the resemblance to the painter's dream. The valley at our feet is that of the Volturno and the olive groves that decorate its slopes are those of Venafrum, sung by Horace. The moment remains in my memory as one of the rarest visions of Italian travel.

We travellers bound for the Gran Sasso must continue our journey eastward to Pescara, where the main eastern coast line from Ancona to Brindisi is joined. For the next two hours the rails are laid almost along the beach. The colours of land and sea were of thrilling intensity. The blue Adriatic broke off in small, crisp, white waves against the brown beach. Inland low ranges of hills green with spring growths or red with clover, powdered over with the cloud-like grey of olives, capped here and there by town or village, stretched away to an horizon broken by rocky crests on which the snow still lingered. The whole vault was glittering with pure white sunshine.

The station at Giulia Nova is the centre of one or two buildings standing on level alluvial ground a few hundred yards from the sea. The town is built on the first brow of the low hills which extend to the base of the Apennines.

The road, leaving Giulia Nova on the right, soon mounts from the seashore and passes through charming country. Lanes between rose-banks, pink with blossom, lead off to little white farms. On the brows the red clover-fields took all sorts of shades as the sun caught or left them. Sometimes white thorn-bushes lifted themselves in an irregular hedge above the dust of the roadside. But more often the fields and highway were divided only by a trellis of vine tendrils, leaping lightly from branch to branch. The young corn, tall and waving its green ears in the evening breeze, buried almost out of sight the rugged stems of the olive-trees, which, gnarled and split, stood up Tithonus-like, in their stiff unchanging old age, amidst the yearly growths of the generations which have the power to die.

Behind us under a pearly sky lay a bank of intensely blue sea; in front two or three bold peaks raised their snows in front of the sunset. They did not appear to belong to a range but stood apart, separated by clear spaces of air, like the crags which a careful eye detects in the backgrounds of Italian early masters. Through such a rich landscape, shifting constantly in detail but keeping always the same character, we drove on for three hours. As dusk fell the slow motion sent me to sleep. Falstaff under Herne's Oak can hardly have been more bewildered than I was on awaking suddenly to find the air round me alive with dancing lights. The fireflies did not leave us until we had reached our destination.

Téramo is a large country town of 19,000 inhabitants, lying in a valley at the junction of the Vezzola and Tordino, whence its name, a corruption of Interamnes. The cultivated hills around are low enough to allow the snowy tops of the Apennines to shine through their fringe of foliage. Like most Abruzzi towns Téramo boasts a picturesque piazza and a fine Gothic doorway of the early part of the fourteenth century, belonging to a church the interior of which has been sadly modernised. Patient research might possibly lead to the discovery of some interesting frescoes or altarpieces, but we could hear of nothing of the kind. In the Abruzzi the traveller is somewhat beyond the southern limit at which the great painters worked.

Murray recommends a village named Isola as the proper starting-point for an ascent of the Gran Sasso. But in answer to our enquiries a new name was brought forward. By common consent Tosiccía was the point nearest to the mountain accessible by a carriage-road. Beyond that no one pretended to be able to give us any information.

The valley of the Tordino is separated by steep-sided hills from the broader basin of the Vomano. Having crossed the former stream by a bold bridge the road mounted steeply to where two or three roadside houses clustered together; and a bunch of straw hung from an iron balcony, or a large bottle filled with wine or some red liquor to imitate it, and dangling by a string out of window, indicated a group of "Vendite di vino."

High on the hilltop above us a brown village capped the converging slopes and sent a clatter of bells ringing through the warm mid-day air. A new road was just bringing its inhabitants for the first time within reach of wheels. Such a sign of progress is very common throughout Italy, where the Roman instinct for road-making seems under the national government to be reviving with extraordinary vigour.

Lofty Apennines, green below, brown and white above, the " Gemelli di Civitella del Tronto," or the southern spurs of Monte Sibylla, raised broad shoulders against the sky. The road having soon mounted the first hill wound up and down over gentle heights overlooked by the double crest of the Gran Sasso, until after two hours' drive from Téramo it descended sharply to Montoria, situated on the Vomano. At the bridge the highway across the mountains to Aquila was left, and our driver turned up a good country road which soon began to climb a long succession of zigzags. A short descent on the other side brought us to Tosiccía.

The village stands in a singular position, entirely covering a long narrow promontory separated, except for a narrow isthmus, from the surrounding slopes by deep channels worn out of a stiff clay soil by the constant action of two puny streams. On the narrowest point of the neck of land are two or three large houses, and before one of them our vehicle pulled up. We were not very clear what to do next. Should we follow Murray's suggestion and go to Isola, or seek some sleeping quarters nearer the mountain? The bystanders added to our perplexity by introducing into the discussion a new name Pietra Camela. Fortunately some one suggested that there was a young engineer employed in the construction of the new communal roads quartered in the next house, and that the strangers had better enquire of him. The engineer was able to tell us what we wanted to know, and, better still, produced a manuscript map on a large scale of the surrounding country.

Pietra Camela was seen to lie on a spur away to the north of our mountain. The low ridge south of the village still severed us from the valley of the Mavone, a tributary of the Vomano, which flows from the snows of the Gran Sasso, and upon which at some distance from the source, Isola is situated. Arrived on the brow our true course was to turn away from that village and skirt the hillsides to Casale di San Nicolò, a hamlet lying immediately under the shadow of the great peak.

A heavy afternoon shower had burst upon the Gran Sasso, and the hill air was delightfully fresh and bland when we started for our two hours' walk. We did not properly explore the interior of the village. But a few yards west of the piazza we examined a chapel with a fine Gothic door and portal. The gossips, full of information, as usual in Italy, and imparting it even from their rags with the air of well-bred hosts, assured us that a "Signor Inglese" had offered a sum for it as it stood, a prodigious sum, but that unfortunately the communal authorities could not easily part with it. Perhaps the difficulty may be got over, and the stained marbles may yet make their descent into Limbo and come to preach beauty amongst the smoky stucco of South Kensington. At the end of a long meadow on the way to Isola is another chapel, faced with marble golden with years, yet still preserving in its first sharpness the delicate scrollwork of a Renaissance frieze. On the steps before it knelt a brown mendicant friar with a large wallet full of scraps upon his back. In the distance, beyond foothills red with clover and waving with thin olive branches, the broad field of the Adriatic shone white in the mid-day sunshine.

Behind the chapel the deep bed wrought out by one of the streams which have formed the promontory of Tosiccía had to be crossed. Then after passing a tobacco store and a few cottages clustered round a patch of waste land we reached a brow overlooking the valley of the Mavone.

To the south it was bounded by a steep mountain chain rising on the extreme left in snow-streaked precipices. From this range the avalanches fall in spring with great violence. Signor Delfico mentions them under a local name, "le gravure," and says their effects will be deemed incredible unless seen on the spot. Here, as in the Alps, the rush of air prostrates as many trees as the snowfall itself. On a brow below the crags stands Castelli, famous as the chief seat of the manufacture of Abruzzi earthenware, the delicate designs and paintings of which have given it a place in the cabinets of collectors. Next comes a rocky comb, the teeth of which are known collectively as "La Pagliara." Then, round the sources of the Mavone, the chain sinks into hills wooded to the summit. Above them, solitary and unsupported, the Gran Sasso, now seen for the first time from crown to base, lifted its bold crest 8000 feet[1] above our heads. In scale and in the richness of the foliage from which it springs, it may be compared to the Sixt peaks, and in general appearance it is not unlike the Pointe de Tanneverge as seen from that village. But by its greater symmetry of form, its apparent isolation, and, to use the only word which conveys the effect, its unexpectedness, the Gran Sasso produces a far deeper impression than any single summit of the Savoyard valley.

The broken rugged chain now before us forms a striking contrast to the monotonous crest visible from Aquila. A careless geographer might assume the ridge to be the same and be puzzled to account for its different appearance. In fact, the Apennine here consists of a double range. For a space of some twenty miles between the sources of the Vomano and Pescara, a lofty serrated ridge runs closely parallel to the flat-topped watershed on its eastern side.

Our track turned westward, following for several hundred yards the crest of the hill, then circled round hollows where springs trickled down under the shadow of the ancient oaks, which still, as in Virgil's days, clothe the slopes of "pater Apenninus." The ground was for the most part cultivated, and there were many labourers at work in the fields. The hamlets were clusters of very rude stone-built cottages. Before one of them we met a well-mounted horseman bargaining with a woman for her hay. As we passed he looked round and said, "See this woman; I have come all the way from the coast to buy, and she won't sell for less than so-and-so." As he turned to speak to us I noticed that he wore a revolver under his coat.

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[1] Tosiccía is only 1355 feet, the Gran Sasso—west peak, 9577 feet; east peak, 9554 feet (*Bolletino del Club Alpino Italiano*).

This village was in the valley on the banks of the stream, and to reach it we had descended steeply and crossed the torrent. Half an hour's steady climb through a fine oak wood, the glades of which were already pink with tufts of cyclamen, brought us to our destination. San Nicolò consists of a few poor cottages, sheltered in the woods, and on the bank of a bright brawling torrent just where it issues from a hidden dell at the base of the Gran Sasso. The mountain, a sharp-pointed precipice of yellowish-white rock raised on a broad pedestal of beech forest, shoots up immediately overhead. The face of the cliffs is of inaccessible steepness, save perhaps in one place, where the spring avalanches, which were now lying in a broad white streak amongst the green, had tumbled over.

Our companion had been told where to take us. Poor as the place was, San Nicolò had its priest, and we were to be his guests for the night. The parsonage was a small two-roomed cottage. Beside the fire-place of the outer room hung a broken guitar and a loaded gun. A little table let down from the wall and disclosed a cupboard containing some cups and saucers. On shelves stood a few pieces of rough Abruzzi earthenware. Two or three stools completed the furniture. The back room contained a large bed and a few stores; dry grapes and cured meat were suspended from the rafters. It was a peasant's home, and François Dévouassoud, with his large mountain experience, looked on its owner as *le plus pauvre curé* he had ever met with.

Our host seemed, however, contented with his lot. He gave us a cheerfully apologetic welcome, and set about doing the honours of his house with friendly dignity. His hospitable pride would not allow us to fall back on our provisions. Good soup, fair country wine, and excellent coffee were provided by his own hands. In return we offered tea, a beverage he had never seen before, and was very curious to know the price of. He had no regular servant, but depended for help in his housekeeping on the friendly aid given by one or another of his flock, with whom he evidently lived on the best of terms. His only companion at home was a large dog who, despite the spiked collar, which proved him a formidable antagonist for the mountain wolves, shared the gentle and prepossessing manners of his master.

We could see from the door the great rock-pyramid lifting itself up into the quivering sky with pale stars already hanging about its head. I sat watching it, but was soon called in imperatively by the priest on the ground of the danger of catching cold. Our conversation ran on the state of the country. Old tales of brigandage were told; in particular how a band had once sheltered, and, as I understood, been captured in the great woods behind the village. No outrage, however, had been known in the neighbourhood for ten years—" tutti morti, povera gente " was the epilogue of the brigand-drama in the Abruzzi. People still went armed from habit and since it is better to be on the safe side, but there was certainly no risk. The peasants were all quiet folk, and besides there were soldiers everywhere. As to the Gran Sasso strangers seldom came to see it. The visit of a Count from Turin was well remembered. At this season the ascent was " impossibile "; there was too much snow. Our host had never been on the top, and proposed to come with us on the morrow as far as was possible. Then, in turn, he asked us of England. Was it true there were many people there who did not belong to the Catholic Church?

No persistence in refusal—and our reluctance was not feigned—would dissuade the good priest from yielding us his big bed in the back room. Having, with many clerical and apologetic jokes as to the years of purgatory from which our penances under his roof must release us, wished us good night, he prepared himself a shake-down in the parlour. My companion and I laid ourselves upon the bed for the dark hours. To me they seemed to pass slowly. Two-thirds only asleep, my brain, sluggish enough usually, broke loose and made up for itself ingenious and disagreeably exciting romances. The good priest it was unwarrantably pleased to fancy a traitor, who was now summoning a band of brigands to fall upon us. Their approach was audible, I could recognise in their leader the man we had seen bargaining for hay. They were now close to the door. Should we fight or surrender ? While one half my brain was agonisedly debating this question, the other half was perfectly aware it was being made a fool of, and that the only noise was the movement of cattle, the falling of leaves, and the murmur of the torrent. Such dreams, however, make night hideous, and I was heartily glad when the striking of the sixth or seventh match announced it was half-past one, and that we might pretend it was time to be stirring. We proceeded leisurely to light a fire and boil our coffee. At the last moment we were delayed by our host. We secretly hoped he had slept off any wish to come with us, and as he shambled about in his slippers there had seemed little reason to suspect him of any mountaineering design. But to our dismay, when we announced ourselves ready to start, he suddenly drew forth a pair of top-boots unseen before, and commenced slowly to grease them before putting them on. During this somewhat lengthy process we had to wait in patience ; for to have done anything else would have been an unpardonable return for so much simple-hearted kindness. After all it was little more than half-past two when we walked out into the clear moonlight.

San Nicolò could not be better situated as a starting-point for the ascent. We had had a good deal of cross-country and up- and down-hill work to reach the village. But the path above it " attends strictly to business." Immediately behind the houses it climbs steeply into a narrow dell lying at the very base of the great horn, and keeps close to the clear copious torrent which dashes down through the beechwoods. In their midst we came upon the last roof, a small chapel standing near a holy well. Several paths now branched off ; we chose the steepest and straightest, which remains near the water. Our companion, whose limbs were not equal to his spirit, here left us, and we pushed on quickly. Already a far faint orange light shone in the east, where grey sky and sea melted into each other. Our path was interrupted by steep banks of avalanche snow. Having lost the track we had to scramble up as best we could through the tangled thickets, now threading a way through an overgrown dell, now raising ourselves up a steep pitch by the help of the branches. In the white dawn which goes before the sun we could see pale-faced primroses looking up at us from the dark ground. The increasing light showed us the treasures we were treading on. The dell to which Sordello introduced Dante in his ascent of the mountain of Purgatory had no richer or more odorous carpet. At our feet were beds of violets all put out of countenance by one deep cup of intense blue, the great gentian, half as large again as in the Alps. By the time we had gained the upper edge of the forest it was already broad daylight. The open down was a feast of fair and delicate forms and vivid colour. Pansies of every tint, gentians, cup- or star-shaped, mingled with many unfamiliar blooms. Last of all, long looked for but found only just below the snow, we came on a great bed of the poet's narcissus, tall and bending eastwards their fair heads to greet the sunrise.

We were now turning the north-eastern corner of the pyramid of the Gran Sasso, and opening the long trough which runs round its northern flanks and divides it from the sharp-edged spine of the Corno Piccolo. The entrance to this was, however, still far above us, and to reach it we had a steep climb by little goat-tracks amongst rocks where the snow still occupied every hollow.

As we mounted, the sky in the east grew brighter and the sea-mists were barred with yellow light. At last a speck of pure gold shone on the horizon. Very broad and flat the great luminary raised itself out of the waters, appearing at one moment a long burning bar rather than an orb. The cuckoos had long been awake, but now the whole choir of birds sent up to us a morning chorus.

I had thought it possible the sun would have risen out of the Dalmatian Islands; but Lissa, the nearest, is some 130 miles off, and we failed at any time of the day to distinguish it, as was not wonderful.

We were now on a level with the plain of Ara Pietra (6668 feet). The trough or valley before us was deepest under the Corno Piccolo; we followed the higher shelf under the bold cliffs of the Gran Sasso in order to profit as far as possible by the bare rocks. Arrived in the hollow enclosed by the two summits and the high semicircular ridge connecting them, we had a choice of routes.

It must be borne in mind that the Gran Sasso itself is a forked peak, the western prong being slightly the loftiest. In summer the shortest way to either top lies doubtless up the slopes leading to the highest hidden basin, the "Calderone," where some snow lies all the year round. But in May steep and hard frozen banks, which would have required the axe, effectually concealed the traces of glacial levelling mentioned by Count Paul de St. Robert. We took the ridge falling northwards from the highest peak. It proved longer than I had expected. The limestone was loose, shattered, and tolerably steep, so that there was room for some scrambling. A level and rather narrow snow-crest led to the crowning knob, on our side a bank of hard snow where my guide's ice-axe came into use.

Seen whether from above or below, the Gran Sasso is a true mountain. A great precipice fell from our feet on the south. An impracticable crest, broken by deep gaps and a bold isolated tower, joined us to the slightly lower eastern horn. The Corno Piccolo cut off some of the plain country to the north with its long saw-edge of pale rock. South of our peak the range fell towards the Adriatic in steep wooded slopes. On the west a ridge similar in character to that we had just climbed dropped suddenly on to the watershed of the Apennine, the dull uniform screen which hides the Gran Sasso from Aquila. It is a singularly featureless bit of mountain structure, with a top broad and flat enough for a racecourse. The traveller who has climbed the long zigzags of the mule-pass leading from Isola into the Central Abruzzo south of the Gran Sasso, finds himself on the rim of a great basin of pasturage, the Campo Imperiale of maps, which lies only a few hundred feet below him, and is girded on the opposite side by a second ridge, which has to be traversed before the real descent begins. Upon this upland plain at the time of our visit the snow lay in heavy streaks.

Central Italy was spread out below us: huge rolling waves of red-brown earth flecked on the top with snow for foam, dashed here and there in the hollows with intense green, where we looked down upon the basin of Solmona, or across into the valley of the Garigliano. The eyes ranged up and down the Apennines, from the Majella to Monte Sibylla. The Adriatic spread out in the east a shining pale surface of water. The Roman Campagna or the Mediterranean we could not distinguish. There was nothing equal in effect to the enormous stretch of the Landes as seen from La Rhune above St. Jean de Luz, or to the romantic coast-line of the Gulf of Genoa from the Pania.

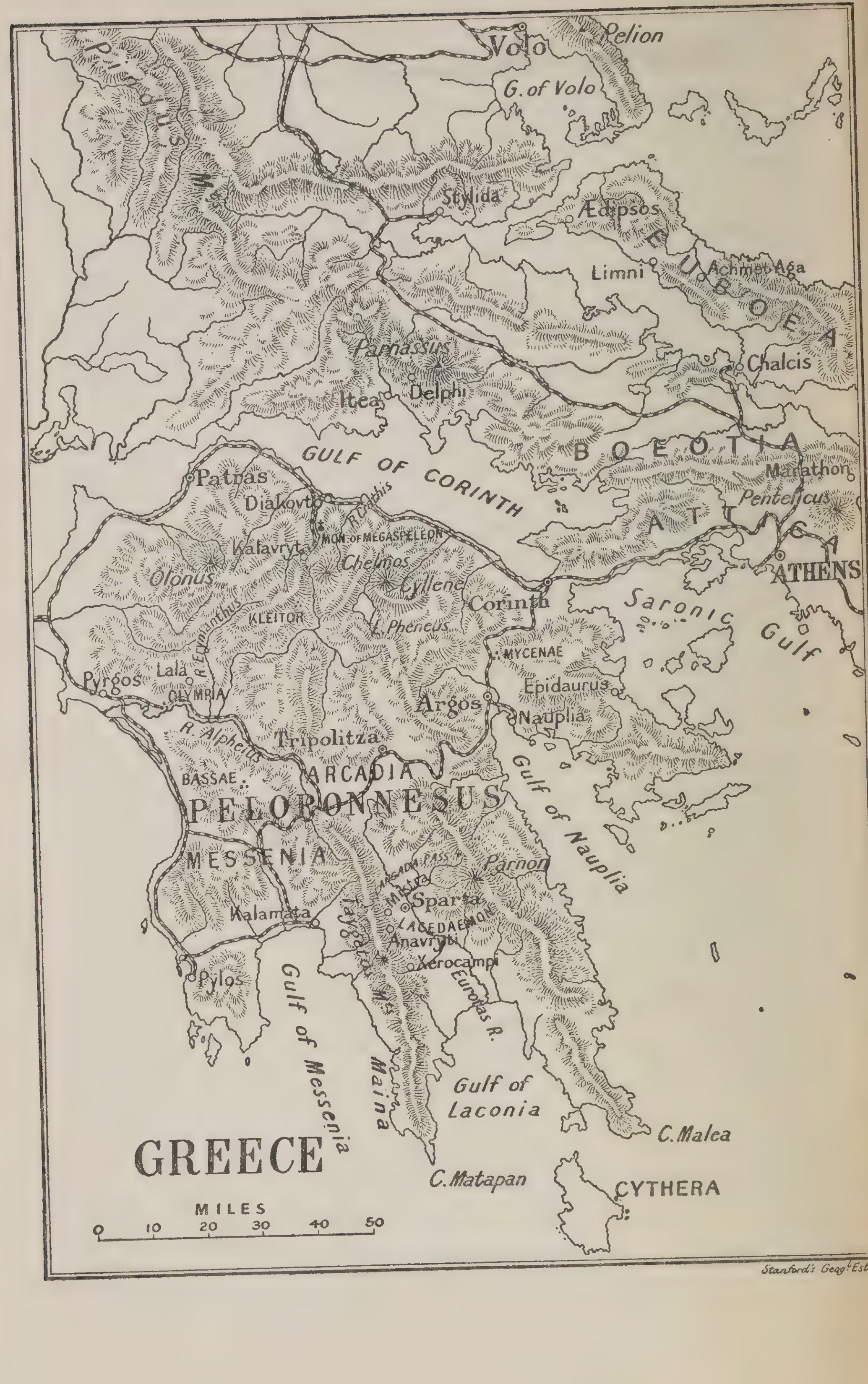
Climbers are sometimes asked whether a panorama repays an ascent. I do not recommend any one who counts a mountain walk so much irksome expenditure of energy to climb the greatest of the Apeninnes. Those, however, who look upon the summit view as only one among the pleasures of the day, will see a striking scene with a wild savage character of its own, unlooked for so far south.

We repaired the stone man, which was much the worse for its wild winter. The only record was an advertisement sheet of a "farmacista" of Chieti, who announced that he had composed a delicious cordial with the aid of the rare herbs of the Majella. A note added in pencil mentioned that having now visited also the Gran Sasso he would prepare in honour of the Italian Alpine Club an "Elixir del Gran Sasso." He would have done well to have supplied a sample of his wares instead of tantalising us with descriptions of their excellence. Before we left the top a company of white vapours had collected in the hollows under the mountain and was curling up its sides, cutting off from moment to moment fragments of the view. These aided to decide us against descending into the Calderone and visiting also the eastern tooth.

The ascent from San Nicolò, a matter probably of nearer 8000 than 7000 feet, had occupied six hours of steady walking (without counting halts). The return was a very different affair. Once off the ridge we flew down on winged heels at a pace Mercury himself might have envied.

From 9000 feet to deep in the beechwoods our progress was a series of shoots down snow-slopes and avalanche beds. We were actually in motion scarcely an hour and a quarter, although the whole time of our descent was more than doubled by halts. First we lingered to gather flowers, then we lay down under the trees whence we could look out to the distant sea over miles of brown foothills clothed in a transparent veil of young leafage. Through the hollows ran the rivers, long ribbons of golden light bending and broadening as they neared the coast. A peasant girl singing and twirling her distaff climbed past with her flock of goats, and became part of a classical day-dream.

The priest welcomed us back and at once set himself again to hospitable cares. We must eat and rest, he insisted, before returning to Tosiccía. In manners he constantly reminded me of an Eastern host. The similarity at last became embarrassing. I admired a rough specimen of Abruzzi ware, a jug only to be drunk out of without spilling by those who knew its trick. It was with some difficulty we persuaded the good man not to stuff it into our provision sack. It took much more persuasion to prevail on him to accept as a present a packet of English tea. "With this remedy," he exclaimed, "I shall cure all the illness in the parish next winter." At last he slung his gun across his shoulders, locked his door, and walked with us a mile on the way, showing, as he had from the first, a courtesy that was touching in its simplicity. When we parted he dismissed us each with a double kiss of peace and many benedictions.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Delphi
Itea
GULF OF CORINTH
BOEOTIA
Marathon
Pentelicus
ATTICA
ATHENS
Patras
Diakovto
R. Buphis
MON. OF MEGASPELEON
Kalavryta
Chelmos
Olonus
Cyllene
Corinth
Saronic Gulf
R. Erymanthus
KLEITOR
L. Pheneus
MYCENAE
Lala
Pyrgos
OLYMPIA
Epidaurus
Argos
Nauplia
R. Alpheus
Tripolitza
BASSAE
ARCADIA
PELOPONNESUS
Gulf of Nauplia
MESSENIA
ARCADIA PASS
Parnon
Mistra
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Stanford's Geog¹ Estab¹

IV

CLASSICAL CLIMBS

I BEGAN my tour in Greece on the local May Day (May 12) by a training walk with a companion up Pentelicus. The weather was singularly inappropriate both to the season and the country. Wild mists were rushing over the ridge of the mountain. Some Greeks who were picnicking under the plane trees beside the monastery at the foot of the ascent warned us that we should soon find ourselves ἐν σκότῳ. We were never befogged for long. But the glimpses of sea and land and mountain, of the Saronic Gulf and Marathon and Euboea, seen through the flying vapours, suggested an obvious mistranslation. We could fancy ourselves on a Scotch Ben more easily than in Attica. The top was a garden of tiny wildflowers — northern flowers rather than Alpine—blooming in the crannies of the highest crag and shining radiantly, like jewels, under the dull sky. We soon turned our backs on the storm and ran down quickly among the innumerable quarries, new and old, which have given the little mountain its characteristic colour and its world-wide fame. We had seen the last of winter and rough weather. When we got back to Athens the sky was serene, and we found the house doors hung with wreaths to celebrate the coming of summer.

In his *Sketches in Italy and Greece* Symonds alleges that every country has a landscape of its own. In a sense this is true—almost a truism. But what is a country? Political states have discarded natural boundaries. There are, no doubt, certain broad distinctions between the three southern peninsulas—Spain, Italy, Greece. But Modern

Greece contains many regions and varieties of scenery. The tourist who lands only in Attica is apt to carry away, as I did fifty years ago, a very false idea of Greece as a whole. He imagines it a sun-baked, waterless, shadeless land, where the streams hardly trickle and the only trees are dusty olives. The truth is that the diversities of landscape in Greece correspond to its ancient divisions. They were the cause of those divisions. The trend and height of its mountain ridges, the complexity of its coasts, severed the communities from one another, inclined them to remain separate states, forced the inhabitants to become sailors and traders. A study of the natural surroundings of the Greeks is a clue to much of their history.

To get any comprehensive idea of Greek landscapes the traveller should at least make the tour of the Peloponnesus, sail to Delphi, and ride through the forests of Euboea. In this small space of the earth's surface he will find as many shifts of scenery as in a modern play. The luxuriant and romantic is succeeded by the severe and classical, cornland and olive garden by pastoral meadows and alpine forests, broad valleys by pinnacled ravines. If Greece fails at all it is not in various beauty, but in the attempt at the sublime. The man of many mountains may sometimes smile at the adjectives lavished by the scholar on the cliffs of Parnassus or Chelmos.

Let me sketch a few of the passing incidents of a brief tour. It is a pleasant ride from Epidaurus across the hills to Nauplia on its brilliant bay. From the plain of Argos—a smooth, in spring perfectly green, carpet, laid between a deep bay and a horse-shoe of golden hills — an almost profane train, after halting at stations where the porters call out "Mycenae!" "Argos!" lifts you by long curves round the hills into Arcadia. Its southern frontier, near Tripolitza, is a wide treeless upland, where flat cornlands, divided by hedges of dog-roses, are ringed about by low grey hills. The scanty streams come to a premature end in underground burrows or muddy pools. It is the sort of country that serves for a background to the figures in Burne-Jones's picture of "The Mirror of Venus." The real, or rather the poet's, Arcadia lies a few miles farther north, a maze of hill and dale, of forests and vineyards and olive gardens, sprinkled with villages and monasteries, which, like those of the Italian Alps, often hide among the river sources in the inmost recesses of the range. In the little mountain towns, where wheels are perhaps still unknown and the post takes four days from Athens, the bazaar preserves a touch of Turkish times, and a tall plane tree may serve in place of a tower to carry the church bell. On the north the broad screen of Chelmos shelters this happy land from the blasts of Boreas and pours forth living waters in the sudden fountains which are one of the glories of the Greek highlands and of classical legend. A typical scene is the Vale of Kleitor, viewed from the little pass that leads into it from the Monastery of St. Theodore at the source of the Erymanthus ; on a fine June morning as fair a pastoral as any painter could desire for a subject.

From Tripolitza a long road runs south to Lacedaemon. The fame of Sparta may lead the fancy astray. One looks for a rock-girt citadel, a frugal land. Nothing can be less "Spartan" than the Spartan landscape, when it first bursts on the traveller's eyes. For many miles his road has circled among the bare undulations of Southern Arcadia, past shrinking meres that will be mud by midsummer, through a landscape that has little variety of feature or charm of foreground. At last a great snow-peak flashes over one of the near hills ; deep hollows, like combes in the Downs, open in front. The road plunges into one of them, climbs the spur beyond, and, fastening on it, reaches a brow and a wayside inn whence the broad valley of the Eurotas is seen, spread like a map some 2000 feet below. It is a land of planes and poplars, of orange gardens and vineyards and fig trees, of mulberries and maize, of hedgerows and copses, of all the offspring of sunshine and running waters. On the farther side, the west, it is walled in by the range of Taygetus. From the plain the mountain rises abruptly in a succession of red rocky knees, thrust out into the greenery and separated by precipice-overhung chasms. On their top they support a broad shelf of fields and forests, above which rises a long, tent-like roof of pure winter snow, which, when seen end on, turns into a sharp peak. The highest point is 7874 feet, or 7000 feet above its base.

The town of Sparta is a modern affair, a straggling "garden city," with many detached houses, unpaved lanes, an untidy street of stores, a conspicuous church, and a minute, if interesting, museum.

Taygetus divides Lacedaemon from Messenia ; the direct track between them crosses the Langada Pass, which takes its name, like the Dariel, from a defile. It is a fine defile, and was a difficult one for animals before the new road was finished. Its feature is the belt of plane trees between bare beetling crags ; its fault the want of living waters ; the stream ceases to run in early summer. Trypi, at its lower end, is one of the most fortunate villages in Greece, abounding in fountains which nourish orchards and gardens, green as those of the North, and rich in all the fruits of the South.

I must hurry on with my reminiscences. Among those that will not be left out is Ithome, with its view over the unbroken plain of currant vines and mulberries to the south, and to the west towards Pylos, across hills where the lights and shadows flying over the fast ripening corn clothed the earth in a cloak of shot green and gold. A wider panorama over almost all the southern Peloponnesus is gained from the broom-clad heights behind the Temple of Bassae.

From Olympia it is well to go as far as Lala on the way to the Erymanthus. The road climbs among the wooded banks which buttress a high plateau. At every turn some new ravine yields a fresh vista, framed in picturesque oaks and firs, of the broad valley of the Alpheius and its girdle of mountains. There can be few more beautiful drives in Greece, and the scenery is typically Greek. For there is, I admit, at least one common element in Greek landscape, the hill shapes. Greek mountains almost invariably have individual form ; they do not lie crowded in undistinguished and indistinguishable masses, after the manner of Grampians or many Apennines.

I did not return from Lala to Olympia, but proceeded through the highlands to Lake Pheneus and the Monastery of Megaspeleon. For two days we rode up the valley of the Erymanthus, and then over the bold spurs of Chelmos. Beyond Lala the road for many miles traverses a lofty deserted tableland, divided between commons and oak forests. After a long ascent it enters, at a great height on its western slope, the deep cleft in the hills out of which the Erymanthus flows. The scenery is mountainous but monotonous until the little Monastery of St. Theodore is reached. It hides itself high among the woods in a secluded basin at the very source of the stream. Its garden hangs on a steep hillside, and its broad terrace is shaded by noble planes and watered by flashing fountains. But it is tenanted by a crowd of sickly, unclean acolytes and harmless lunatics, whom the monks lodge but scarcely clothe. On the third day from Olympia I passed through that delightful bit of Arcady, the Vale of Kleitor (which I have already mentioned), and reached by a rugged pass the Monastery of St. George, overlooking Lake Pheneus, a still upland tarn, which depends for its charm mostly on atmospheric effect. The last day's ride was delightful. No forest track can be more varied and romantic than that which leads to the valley of the Crathis and the Styx. Cyllene and Chelmos are fine objects in the foreground during the ascent, and from the top the Gulf of Corinth and its girdling mountains form a picture of singular beauty.

The majority of modern Greek travellers have known little more of Alpine scenery than the ancient Greeks. Consequently the terrors of the horse-shoe of cliffs down which the barely perceptible Fall of the Styx trickles have been somewhat exaggerated. " An immense cliff, absolutely perpendicular." " A sheer and in places even absolutely overhanging precipice." These expressions need the explanation given in the next line by their author, " by far the most awful line of precipices I have ever seen." [1] The cirque of the Styx is the most severe piece of mountain scenery I came across in the Peloponnesus; it might be among the lesser Alps of the Tyrol. But there nobody, I think, would pay much attention to it. The Styx would never have made any impression on a Swiss or Tyrolese peasant, though Homer was quite right in picking it out as the most strictly Alpine scene in the Peloponnesus. It is "alpine," but of a mild variety.

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[1] Sir J. G. Frazer's little volume, *Pausanias, and other Greek Sketches*, conceals under its title one of the most useful companions to a tour in Greece. The criticism made above is the only one I have to make on the author's appreciations of scenery.

From the Styx I took an unfrequented route—not even a track in parts—to Megaspeleon. We climbed to a jagged ridge just under Chelmos; then leaving the path to Kalavryta, strolled first over high tulip-painted pastures where snow still lay in shady nooks, and then down a very steep hillside into a long, narrow, secluded glen dotted here and there by pastoral huts. Where the ground broke away again, our stream was caught and carried off in a conduit. The path followed the water and soon gained a narrow ridge commanding on the right a superb view of the Gulf of Corinth, while on its western side we looked down on the valley of Kalavryta, with the snowy cap of Olonus and many other shapely heights beyond. One of the noblest natural sights in Greece is the long gorge that leads from the foot of the monastery hill to the shore at Diakovto. It remains in my memory as a procession of incredible flame-like rocks; of bastions, pinnacles, towers, soaring four thousand feet overhead out of the richest vegetation—pines and firs on the heights, in the clefts wild figs, oaks, cistus, bays, olives, dripping wells fringed with luxuriant ferns—and near the Gulf, of first clusters then fields of rose-red oleanders. The oleander grows and blossoms round Diakovto like gorse on an English common.

This vision, alas, can only be gained from the cars of the toy train that runs once a day at about four miles an hour up and down the otherwise pathless defile. Permits, I believe, can be obtained to walk along the line, often a mere shelf above the bright torrent, and closed in one place by an iron door.

The lover of forest scenery cannot afford to neglect Euboea. No contrast can be more striking than that between the bare brown hills of Attica and the forest-clad mountains and flowery glades of the great island of the Aegean. From Calchis a road climbs inland over a high ridge, dense with pine woods, to descend on the farther side through tangled glens where oaks and ilexes replace the pines, and the soil is covered with a dense undergrowth of Mediterranean cistus and arbutus. As the country becomes more open gigantic plane trees alternate with open glades watered by clear dancing streams. It is a landscape suited for the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. At last signs of cultivation indicate the approach to a village and the eyes rest on a substantial house and farm buildings, ringed by a high hedge of flowering oleanders. This is Achmet Aga, a property long owned by an Englishman, Mr. Noel, who did what was possible to introduce civilised methods into the primitive husbandry of Greece. It lies surrounded by a sylvan wilderness, itself ringed by a circle of stately hills, almost in the centre of the island and out of sight of either coast. It is a long but beautiful ride across the mountains back to the Euripus at Limni, a little place where, since steamers seldom call, a boat can be hired to sail up to the hot springs of Aedipsos. Thence my tour took me to Volo. For the Vale of Tempe called for a visit, inasmuch as it was to the Roman tourist what the Yosemite Valley is to the American, and the Vale of Lauterbrunnen was to the British of the eighteenth century, the accepted specimen of wild mountain scenery. It is a well-wooded glen, rendered more striking by its position between the broad Thessalian plain and the sea. But it lacks the picturesque incidents, the crags and cliffs of many less famous defiles hidden away among the Italian Alps or under the Spanish Picos de Europa. Still the Turkish coffee-house, shadowed by ancient planes at its lower end, is a delightful spot for a picnic. And it is pleasant to know by sight Pelion, Ossa, and Olympus. Pelion, a massive green mountain, with villages on its lower slopes, rises straight out of the waves ; Ossa, a shapely, naked pyramid, stands up alone ; Olympus shows as a huge broad-shouldered mass, on the upper slopes of which the bright mists continually gather, parting for a few minutes to reveal a white snow-ladder, which Hermes may have found suitable for a glissade to the lower world.

In a country so mountainous as Greece most travel is more or less mountain travel. I have attempted to note a few of the first impressions of a mountaineer. I shall allow myself a little more licence in recounting the ascents of Taygetus and Parnassus, peaks which between them can almost make up 16,000 feet above sea-level (Taygetus, 7874; Parnassus, 8064).

The highest top of Taygetus lies some twelve miles south-south-west of Sparta. The peasants who make a pilgrimage annually to the chapel on the summit in the month of August follow a path which climbs to the village of Anavryti, on the middle shelf of the mountain, and then slants upwards to a gap in one of its spurs and across the upper slopes to the saddle north of the culminating crest.

The muleteer procured for me at Mistra by my dragoman, who altogether declined any share in the adventure, preferred another route. When I was called at 1.30 A.M. the Vale of Sparta and the hills opposite were brilliantly lit by a sinking moon. A gigantic cypress planted on the terrace of the desolate convent garden threw its long shadow far out into the plain. From the fig and orange groves below rose warm waves of fragrance and a full chorus of nightingales. I scrambled sleepily in the deep shadow down the broken staircase that leads from the deserted city of the Crusaders to the modern village. Then we mounted for our long ride. The track led through walled orange groves, between unfenced cornfields, over the barren bed of a torrent, past gushing fountains shaded by tall poplars, elms, and oleanders. The shadowy cliffs and gorges of Taygetus were always close on our right. Slowly their shadows grew faint; the cliffs reflected the first light in the eastern sky. I watched at leisure the slow approaches of dawn.

It was 6 A.M. when, in the first full flood of sunshine, we rode into the village of Xerocampi. The women were on their way to work in the vineyards for which the place is famous; a group of men had begun the day's gossip round the village coffee-house. Others were busy on a new church;

for there are enterprise and money in Xerocampi, and some of its inhabitants have even sought their fortune in America and returned. I found several who spoke a few words of English, and by their aid I secured a guide acquainted with the mountain tracks.

A copious stream issuing from a cleft in the foothills flows through Xerocampi and nourishes the perpetual verdure of its environs. Our path crossed it near some ancient water-mills and then climbed steeply on its right bank up to the crest of a spur covered with short turf and broom, like an English common. A monastery was plastered into a hollow in the face of the great cliff opposite. Following the narrow spine of the hill as it rose buttresswise against the mountain, we passed between fields scarlet and gold with poppies and fast-ripening corn, and near a group of brown huts in a clearing on the lower skirts of the forest belt. Then we plunged into woods of oak and beech and fir, carpeted with a small red cyclamen, bright daisy-shaped flowers, and a variety of ferns. The flora was much richer than that on Parnassus, owing, no doubt, to the greater humidity of the climate. Taygetus seems to catch all the moisture the south wind brings from the sea. Our path skirted the slopes of a deep basin, where little mountain farms or fields lay islanded in the great wood. In front rose the broad snowy slope of Taygetus. Some three hours above Xerocampi we made a second breakfast beside a most idyllic fountain. Here we took a narrow track, which leaves the main path on the right and ascends steeply into a glen under the south-east ridge of Taygetus. At its head is a green saddle, on which lies a sloping meadow shaded by the highest groups of weather-beaten firs. This proved one of the most enchanting spots it has ever been my good fortune to discover. We had gained the rim of the basin by which we had so far ascended, and a new prospect burst on my eyes. Ridge beyond ridge, dividing folds of forest, fell one behind the other towards the shining waters of the Gulf of Laconia, 6000 feet below. In the distance stretched out the long coast-line of the promontory of Maina. Cythera was a shadow on the horizon. In the absence of a bevy of Laconian virgins a goatherd and his flock served as a classical foreground. I almost envied the horseman who was to wait here for my return. But duty and habit pointed up a steep, warm, stony slope. From its top the south-east ridge of Taygetus suggested a fine direct climb to the summit. My guide, however, persisted in bearing away to the right across a shelf of sheep pasturage lying on the east face of the mountain. The ground, sodden with the lately melted snow which still lay thick in the hollows, was ablaze with crocuses. What remained to be climbed was a broken, rocky face of perhaps 1000 feet, in places precipitous, but offering several practicable lines of ascent. When near the top I came suddenly on one of the last zigzags of the pilgrims' path, which was almost buried in snow. It may be roughly described as making the base of the triangle of which, by descending the valley to Xerocampi, we had traversed the two sides. But my " times " to the top from Mistra were the same as those of that great mountaineer, F. F. Tuckett, who followed the pilgrims' track. Arrived on the gap between the two loftiest crests I saw an easy ridge of rock and snow before me. The last fifty yards, where the snow was hard and fairly steep, tried my guide's nerve, and he would have turned back had I not trampled steps for him. The top of Taygetus has been curiously treated. When I reached what had from a distance looked like a dilapidated stone man it proved to be the ridge of the roof of a small chapel. The rest was buried under snow-drifts, which choked up a little stone enclosure and several cells built round it. When was the first altar erected on this the highest peak in Peloponnesus? I envied the pilgrims who watch sunsets and moonrises here in August.

It was just mid-day when I arrived, and local mists were playing round the mountain, which promised, and before long produced, a brief thunder shower. The distant panorama was imperfect; but I saw a great deal under beautiful shifting lights. To the north the eyes overlooked all Peloponnesus to the vapours that rested on its northern heights. To the west the green hills of Messenia glowed in sunshine; its great bay swept round in a wonderful curve, and beyond lay Pylos and the distant islands. At our very feet a little town hung over its haven, a tiny bay of the Gulf of Kalamata. To the south the long promontory of Cape Matapan stretched out, peak beyond peak, all far below me. A transparent opalescent mist hid Crete, but only veiled Cythera.

My descent to the sheep pasture was a very rapid act of snowmanship. From the gap I enjoyed a long glissade down a broad snow gully. This proceeding gave a shock to my Greek guide. The story he told on our return to Xerocampi was a proof that winter mountaineering has not yet become a Spartan game. "The Englishman," he said, "stepped out on to the snow, flew off suddenly like an Athens tram-car, and disappeared from sight. I thought him mad, but half an hour later I found him sitting at the foot of the mountain, apparently none the worse." A snow couloir in Greece, like a glacier in the Dolomites, is not a sufficiently familiar object to be treated lightly by the natives.

During the repose thus gained I enjoyed one of the most striking views I have ever had from a mountain. The thunder cloud had dispersed. Beyond the broad valley of the Eurotas the slopes of Mount Parnon opposite glowed in the richest hues of red and gold—gold where the crops were ripening, red where the Indian corn was not yet high enough to cover the tilled ground. The blue vault of the sky overhead, the blue expanse of the distant sea looked solid in comparison. There was something unsubstantial in the bright vividness of the southern landscape.

Pale shadows passed over it as the last vapours drifted or melted away. The far-off sea horizon was a shimmer of silver mist. The effects were as novel as they were beautiful. I could not resist another halt at the meadow on the mountain neck. The whole descent was charming, from the variety of foreground and the exquisite hues of the distance. We rode back up the valley from Xerocampi in the afternoon shadow of Taygetus, and returned to Mistra just before dusk, after a day of eighteen hours, which had not seemed an hour too long. My worthy dragoman had spread my table in the loggia overlooking the Vale of Sparta, and I dined by the light of the rising moon to the strains of a choir of nightingales.

Itea, the port of Delphi, is placed at the opening of a broad valley leading up towards the heights of Kiria, a lofty but obscure neighbour of Parnassus. The famous shrine lies at a much higher level within the mouth of a side-valley, and is approached by the many zigzags of a new and well-engineered road. The temple and its adjuncts stood just behind the spur that closes the entrance to their valley, and missed the view. But from the modern village the eyes range from the blue sea of the gulf over the level plain of grey olives to the bright belt of vines, the darker belt of forests, and the white summer snows of Kiria. Parnassus is completely out of sight. Antiquarians, it is true, have a trick of calling the cliffs behind the shrine Parnassus. One might as well call the slope opposite Interlaken the Faulhorn. From the top of these cliffs it is a two hours' ride to the base of Parnassus. The Castalian Spring, however, is close at hand. Its waters were in great request at the time of my visit for the thirsty flocks that were moving in thousands to the summer pasturages of northern Greece.

This is not the place to linger over the extraordinary interest of the recent discoveries and restorations at Delphi, which now contests with Olympia the distinction of being next to Athens the most interesting classical site in Greece. Our business is with Parnassus. The stony zigzag that scales the cliff immediately behind the sanctuary is warm in June. On the top the traveller finds himself in an undulating upland covered with trees, and only wanting water in the form of streams to be idyllic. In classical times it was resorted to for festivals in honour of Pan ; it still serves for native picnic parties. Beyond it a large cultivated plain and a village of summer huts, suitable for minor poets, lies at the foot of the lower slopes of the real Parnassus. They are, to tell the truth, disappointing. Parnassus forms no feature in the landscape on this side ; it is seen to more advantage from the Gulf of Corinth, or better still from the northern part of Euboea, whence it asserts its dignity as the predominant height of central Greece. The track climbs a steep gully through a somewhat scanty and arid forest. Then it winds about among knolls and hollows until, having rounded the north-western corner of the mountain, it rises above the timber line, and again breasts the hill. So far I had seen rugged crests above me, foreshortened and unimposing, but nothing like a mountain-top. Snow-drifts were now found in every hollow, and I began to wonder how much higher the shepherd's shelter where I proposed to spend the night might prove to be. We discovered it under a big rock in a sloping pasture open to the north-west. There were walls, but no roof, except in the hole beneath the boulder, where the shepherd lay. He had with him two children, who had made themselves niches in the wall. After a slight shower came a fine sunset. The evening shades added beauty and mystery to a wide landscape in which Kiria was conspicuous in the foreground and a fine rock peak in the chain of Pindus on the horizon. I cannot say I slept, but I lay in a rug beside the fire and watched the stars until the moment came to continue the climb. In the faint light of a waning moon my guide and I mounted a succession of screes and snow-slopes till we reached a broad ridge, on the farther side of which lay a white bowl, looking very large in the moonlight. Its meltings drained to the east towards Boeotia. The summits of Parnassus stretched round in a semicircle on our right. "Double-crested" is the classical epithet of the mountain. From many points of view it is descriptive, but on close approach the lower and western crest resolves itself into a long comb with many crags and jags, while the eastern and loftier peak stands apart, a solitary steep-sided cone. In the faint twilight it looked miles away; yet half an hour's walk over snow-fields brought us to its base, and as much of steep trudge to the stone man on the summit.

When I got to the top a faint gleam was already visible in the eastern sky. It quickly deepened and broadened until, without warning, a spot of light shone on the dark sea horizon, grew to an arch, and in a few moments the sun's orb was floating on the sky. To the sailors on the

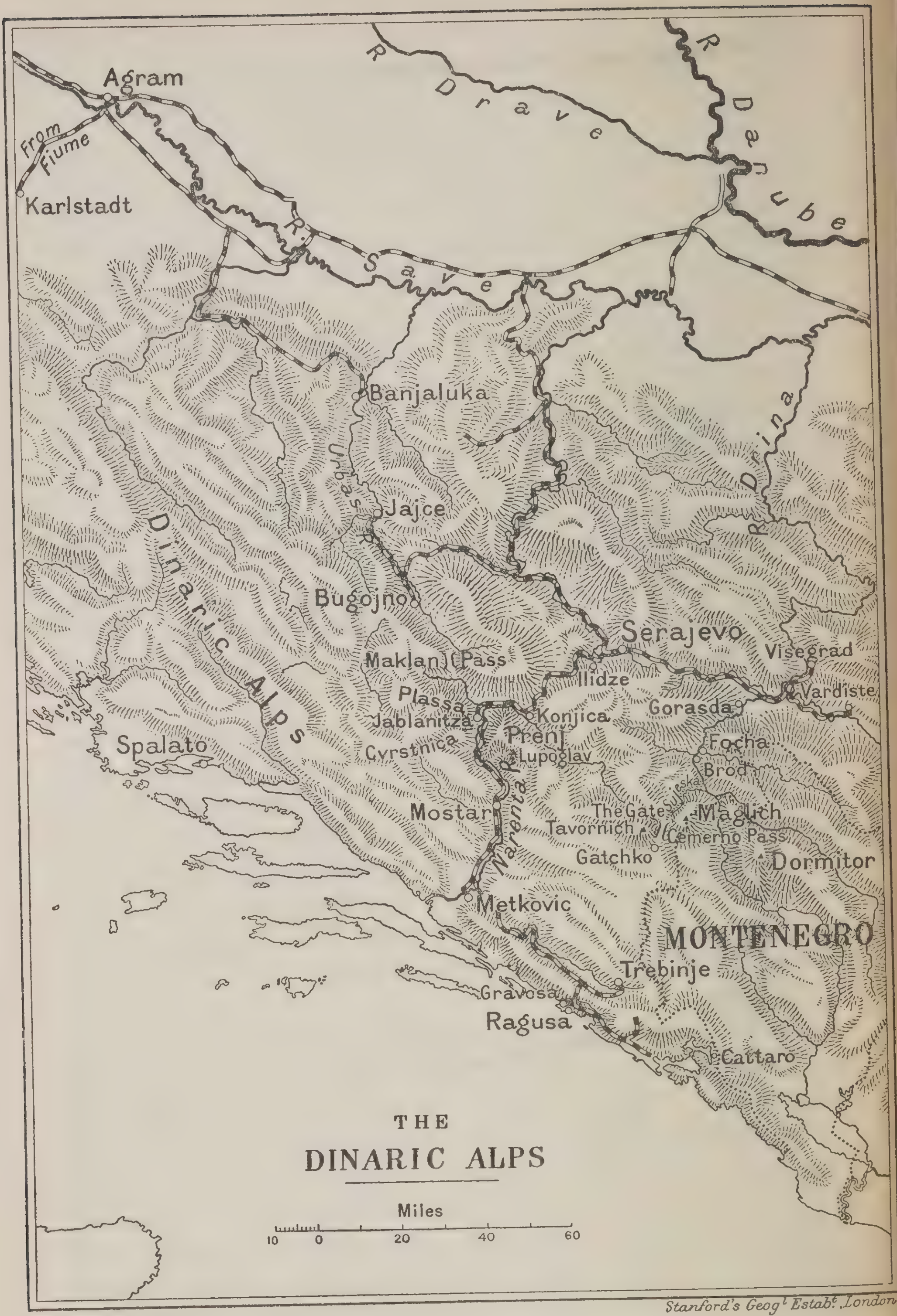
Aegean it had not yet risen, and it was some minutes before a path of light flashed across the waters to Euboea. Then the long backbone of the great island stood out with all its heights and hollows blue against the golden east, throwing a clear-cut shadow on the strait that divides it from the mainland. The plains of Boeotia next took the day ; the mist rose from its lakes, and the rivers flashed out as silver threads across its broad fields. On the northern horizon, beyond the Gulf of Volo, Pelion, Olympus, and even distant Athos took shape as grey phantoms. Still the shores of the Gulf of Corinth were slow to awaken. Night hung reluctantly over the Adriatic long after Attica was in broad day. But at last the veil of twilight was lifted everywhere ; hills and valleys, cities and harbours stood out clear and distinct in local detail and colour. I shall not attempt a catalogue of the famous sites in view. I had had that rare enjoyment, a most successful sunrise, worth a night in the open, and worthy of the Poets' Mountain.

V

THROUGH THE DINARIC ALPS

In the geography books of our childhood we were told of a chain of mountains called the Dinaric Alps. This range—the waterparting between the Adriatic and the Black Sea, between the strong leisurely rivers that dawdle to the Danube and the thin torrents that, when they do not lose themselves underground, race down towards the coast—is in reality only the outer ridge of the complicated hill system which extends over a great part of the Balkan Peninsula. Neither in position nor in the character of its scenery can it be called Alpine in the stricter sense of that word. It boasts no eternal snows or glaciers. No guide-book to the Alps has ever included it in its pages. It is only forty-four years ago that Bosnia and Herzegovina were, after a fierce conflict, rescued from Turkish rule and the disorder inseparable from it and brought under the government of a civilised state. They had the good fortune to have for their first administrator a statesman of liberal views and rare energy and taste—Baron von Kállay.

Under his rule the long limestone gorges were for the first time pierced by bold high roads and railways. His paternal care went further. In his desire to bring the country within the zone of European travel, he saw to the construction of a luxurious bathing establishment near Serajevo, and built out of public moneys hotels in several attractive situations, such as Jajce and Jablanitza. Nor did he stop at this point. He did his best to attract mountaineers by opening up the principal summits by means of paths and huts and arranging guide tariffs. Yet the Bosnian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Serajevo
Visegrad
Maklan Pass
Ilidze
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Plassa
Gorasda
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Konjica
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Stanford's Geog¹ Estab¹ London

highlands remain unknown to most Englishmen, and our climbers' names are few and far between in the Strangers' Books of the mountain huts.

From Central Europe there are several obvious ways of approaching Bosnia. The traveller may steam down the Dalmatian coast and take the line that runs from Ragusa or Metkovic to Serajevo ; or he may reach that town by direct rail from Buda Pest in eighteen hours. A more attractive route is that from Agram. This imposing city, the capital of Croatia, can be reached from England through the Tyrol or by a very quick service *via* the Simplon, Venice, and Fiume. The steamer that leaves Venice at nightfall threads in the early morning hours the picturesque channels of the Gulf of Fiume between shores that were the Riviera and served as the health resort of Austria. The hill scenery on the line to Agram is full of interest and variety. Leaving behind it the mesembryanthemums and olives of the coast, the train climbs in wide curves across open slopes, whence it commands bird's-eye views over the gulf with its bare grey islands and deep land-locked harbours. The higher the line mounts the broader becomes the prospect until it gains the summit level (2985 feet) on a wind-swept down, where massive wooden screens bear witness to the terrible force of the winter gales and snow-drifts. Here the landscape suddenly changes. A climatic and botanical barrier has been crossed, Italian and Mediterranean influences are left behind. The forests are northern, the buildings Slavonic, wood supplants stone on the hillsides and in the houses. The villages are few and far between, and the timber trade seems to be the principal industry of the inhabitants. The rails run in and out through a labyrinth of forest ridges and deep green glens, watered by pleasant trout streams. It is as pretty a succession of sub-alpine pictures as any railway can show—a more primitive and romantic Jura.

Before the traveller reaches Karlstadt, one of the old fortresses of the military march between Christian and Turk, the hills withdraw. But they are never quite out of sight. At Agram we turn south, and before reaching Banjaluka the old frontier is crossed. The country is pleasant, but the costumes at the roadside stations are more remarkable than the scenery.

It is not till after the broad fertile basin of Banjaluka has been left that the mountains begin. A mile beyond the scattered town the Urbas issues from a gorge, in the mouth of which the old wooden cottages and mosques of a Turkish village strike a note often to be repeated and characteristic of Bosnian scenery. It is a peculiarity of the local architecture that the smaller mosques have brown wooden minarets, and that these rise from the ridge of their roofs.

During the seven hours' drive (50 miles) to Jajce (pronounced Yaize) the almost level and perfectly kept road follows the long tranquil reaches of an emerald river through a series of once pathless ravines, separated by soft pastoral basins. The rock is limestone, the woods are mostly beech and fir. The mountains, green and gracious, are on the scale of those of the Gruyère. At the half-way, beyond an open expanse of fields and farmhouses, and under the shadow of a castled crag, a pleasant post-house offers refreshment for man and beast. The defile continues for miles. White crags impend on the left; on the inaccessible ledges grow tall pines with rigid black horizontal branches. The climax is reached in the last gorge, where the river is fairly throttled between cliffs and the road burrows through a winding tunnel and then leaps to the farther bank by a bold bridge —a scene worthy of any of the wildest defiles of the Italian Alps. Then by a sudden transition we find ourselves among green meadows and poplars, where a pilgrimage church and a mosque stand side by side. The slopes soften, and as the valley bends westwards, the old walls and castle, the Italian campanile and Turkish minarets, of Jajce rise in front of the after-glow, and we drive through a mediaeval gate and an Oriental bazaar to draw up at the door of a modern hotel.

Jajce fascinates all its visitors, and despite recent blemishes —the railroad and the hotel—retains an unique aspect. It stands on the slope of a green mountain-girt basin at the point where a side glen opens on the valley of the Urbas, and that stream has cut itself a deep bed. Its tributary, preserved from sudden floods by a series of lakes a few miles higher up, and thereby deprived of its erosive force, tumbles immediately under the hotel into the main stream from a much higher level in a broad and most picturesque waterfall. The castle and walled town occupy a rocky ridge projecting from the fertile hillside near the confluence, so that the falling screen of waters forms a part of the background in every view from the opposite slopes. These, except where a wood of exotic pines has been mistakenly planted—the official landscape gardener's ideal in Bosnia is a wood of Christmas trees—are covered with fields, meadows and copses, which harbour frequent brown farms and hamlets, mostly inhabited by Turks. The stream above the falls is curious and fascinating. Owing to the porousness of its limestone bed the channel has become a labyrinth of reefs over and under and round which the water cascades from one green pool to another. On the larger islets old tumble-down wooden mills find standing room, and willows gain everywhere a hold for their roots. The whole arrangement is fantastic and almost theatrical in its picturesque effect. A road keeps company with this charming stream until it reaches two beautiful tarns enclosed in wooded hills and rich in fish and wildfowl. At their farther end a large Turkish village and a romantically situated tea-house overhanging the water supply a goal for an afternoon drive from Jajce.

A direct railway connects Jajce with Serajevo, but the traveller will do well to use it only as far as Bugojno, the head of a branch line, eventually to be extended to Spalato. Bugojno is an unattractive town in the centre of one of the flat, broad, hill-girt basins that are frequent in Bosnian scenery. It is the starting-point for the drive over the Maklan Pass (3682 feet), one of the finest roads in the country. It leads from Bosnia into Herzegovina, and crosses the watershed between the Adriatic and the Black Sea. The road climbs out of the Bugojno basin in one long zigzag up a narrow wooded glen in order to gain a high upland platform, the undulations of which are clothed in a broad cloak of beech forest. Here and there tall plane trees and maples suggest the East, and dark fir pyramids or the golden tints of autumn break the pervading greenery. The landscape is free from any prosaic human details. There are none of the signs of peasant proprietorship or communal ownership which meet the eye constantly in Alpine forests. Democracy, as a rule, is an enemy to romance in scenery as an owner as well as when it comes—in charabancs—as a visitor.

For several miles the view was bounded by the steep banks enclosing the green waterless glades in which the road wound. Then, after passing a few open fields and cottages, it reached a brow from which the ground fell suddenly for some 2000 feet. The deep valley below was surrounded by craggy mountains; those close at hand were grey or ruddy, but the more distant heights borrowed the richest colours from the atmosphere. On the horizon 25 miles off the rocky crests of the Prenj Planina glowed like dark amethysts against a pale blue sky. This view must depend for its effect greatly on illumination, on the weather, and the time of day; as I saw it, it was a most unusual and striking picture.

The descent began with an admirable but too lengthy series of zigzags, which, seen from above, made the hillside look nothing but road. Austrian high roads were always constructed for military purposes and consequently with very gentle gradients. The drive to Jablanitza is through highly picturesque defiles. That village is on the Sarajevo–Gravosa railway; it is also a summer station for the townspeople of torrid Mostar, and has a large hotel run by the Government.

After the attractive descriptions I had heard of it the place somewhat disappointed my expectations. The hotel is buried in an artificial pinewood, and the situation is low (650 feet), while the mountains round are, at least in autumn, arid and scorched. During my visit sunless skies lent no lights and shadows to soften their asperity.

I have little doubt that in early summer the attractions of Jablanitza as a climbing centre are more obvious. The gorge in which it lies is cut to the depth of 7000 feet through the very heart of the Dinaric Alps, allowing the waters of the Narenta, the most considerable stream on this side of the Upper Adriatic, to escape to the sea. On the left the double line of peaks of the Prenj Planina rises to the height of 6965 feet; on the right stand the Plassa (6890 feet) and the Cvrstnica (7306 feet). Both are provided with paths and tourist huts, and guides and horses can be hired at the hotel.

The ascent to the Prenj lies through a side glen which opens into the main valley three miles below Jablanitza, so that if a train fits it is well to profit by it to the next station. A mile beyond this the path leaves the water at a small hamlet and climbs a steep hillside in interminable zigzags, exposed to the morning sun and without shade in the lower portion.

The tediousness of this part of the walk is repaid as soon as the crest of the first spur is reached. This spot, known as the Poldiruhe, commands a very fine view of the gorge of the Narenta and the surrounding ranges. The scenery has, I think mistakenly, been compared to that of the Dolomites. In Southern Tyrol the lower slopes are green and rounded; the peaks rise above them as huge, weird blocks or splintered pinnacles. In Herzegovina the mountain gorges and the lower slopes are torn and wild, but the summits are for the most part blunt. The region is now poor in streams, but it bears all the traces of tremendous water action in past ages. Nowhere have I seen glens cut back more deeply into the heart of a range than those on the north and west of the limestone plateau along the edge of which stand the Prenj summits. The cleverly contrived horse-path climbs on the side of a bold buttress dividing two of these glens, making its way between a maze of cliffs by alternately scaling steep gullies and traversing precipitous forest slopes. It commands impressive glimpses into the various ravines opposite: strange caves indent the limestone precipices; pines grow on their jags.

After a slight descent to a saddle connecting the spur with the main mass of the Prenj, a pleasant walk through a fine beech forest leads to the tourist-hut, which looks out over a wide brown pasture towards the Adriatic and the sunset. Soon after our arrival a mist drifted up and enveloped the hut, but by walking up the zigzags for forty minutes I rose above it and could see across a plateau, a limestone waste, like that which lies behind the Aiguille de Varens in Savoy, the more distant peaks of the Lupoglav. The sky was clear to the north and there seemed a fair prospect for the morrow.

Two gendarmes, very quiet visitors, came in late and shared our shelter. Next morning the fog was thick, and it unfortunately hung on the peaks all day. I walked up through it to the summit, usually ascended in 1 hour 40 minutes. But all I gained was a few momentary glimpses into the abysses, and it was useless to think of venturing beyond the path. In fine weather a climber should go up all the peaks, return to the track, and descend by it past another tourist hut to Konjica, a small town and railway station higher up on the Serajevo line.[1]

The second excursion from Jablanitza is the ascent of the Plassa. It has a lake—the Blidinje See—3880 feet above sea-level, not mentioned in the guide-books, but apparently deserving investigation. This mountain is said to produce abundant edelweiss; but I did not see any specimens preserved at Jablanitza, and there is none on the Prenj. On the whole, the scenery about Jablanitza is the wildest I met with in Bosnia; the surrounding heights are very precipitous; in their upper portions naked and severe, while the forest region is attractive. But I have no doubt May and June, when there is a glitter of snow on the heads and a mantle of flowers on the shoulders of the hills, are the better time for a visit. Very good rock-scrambling could doubtless be found by a climber who neglected paths and invented " new routes " up the steep faces.

Serajevo, now of unhappy memory, the capital of Bosnia, is a most attractive city. The Austrians have created a European quarter on the new quays of the Bosna. But they have spared the old bazaar and the encircling ring of suburbs. The wooden brown-roofed Turkish houses embosomed in orchards remain almost untouched; a hundred minarets, white or brown, still vie with the tall poplars on the steep slopes which on three sides hem in the city.

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[1] A description of the ascents of *all* the peaks of the Prenj will be found in the last edition of Hartleben's *Guide*. None offers difficulties to mountaineers.

Those who prefer quiet may stay at the luxurious Baths of Ilidze, which are built in a gay public garden, half an hour by tram from the town.

A considerable addition has been made to the attractions of Bosnia by the railway which runs to the Turkish frontier, throwing out a branch to Visegrad and Servia. The line at present serves only for strategic purposes. But it is obviously in intention, and will probably before long be in fact, a link in a through line to Salonica and Athens. Few lines in Europe have had to encounter greater natural obstacles, or are more interesting both to the lover of landscape and the engineer. For over ninety miles (138 kilomètres) it alternately pierces and bridges hitherto pathless gorges, or winds, by the aid of elaborate earthworks, over hills and through dales, where the superb primaeval beech forests brought back to my memory those of the southern foothills of the Caucasus. Many illustrations and a full description of this " Eastern Frontier Railway " are given in the local guide-book. It is, however, a pity that the compiler has dealt with it so much from an engineer's point of view. The ordinary tourist does not require to know the length of each tunnel, and would prefer pictures which showed less of the rails and more of the scenery they run through. Their gauge is 75 centimètres, that of the other Bosnian lines ; and some idea of the character of the difficulties encountered may be got from the fact that (including the branch leading to the Servian frontier at Vardiste) there are ninety-nine tunnels of a combined length of nine miles and thirty important iron bridges, besides the very heavy revetments necessary to hold up the loose slopes traversed.

From Gorasda, a station on the line, a road leads up the idyllic valley of the Drina, a deep, smooth-flowing stream, whose green waters linger in long, still reaches on their way to the distant Danube. The district is famous for its fruit gardens and orchards. My first object was Focha. This is an old Turkish town, once important as the spot where one of the caravan roads from Constantinople to Ragusa entered the mountain passes. Its situation among meadows at the meeting of two rivers, laden with timber rafts, is most charming. Its principal mosque far surpasses in architecture and decoration any at Serajevo. The minaret is of admirable proportions, the porch is of noble size, the stone-carving of the pulpit and gallery is exquisite, and the interior is painted with delicate designs resembling those of sixteenth-century Persian tiles and carpets.

At Focha the road at the date of my visit ended, and the traveller wishing to ride along the Montenegrin frontier to the sea coast had to hire horses. It is the starting-point for two mountain ascents, that of Maglich (7831 feet), and that of Dormitor (8758 feet), the highest mountain in this part of the Balkan peninsula. The latter mountain lies in Montenegro, two days' ride to the south, and it would be well to enquire if the district is safe before planning an ascent. I had a distant glimpse of its summit from the last brow before descending to Gatchko.

That small town is two days' ride from Focha. The finest scenery on the route is found in the Sujeska Gorge, where wild crags and forests combine to frame the boldest and most picturesque of all the Bosnian defiles. For the present, and until a new road has been made up the valley, the old paved Turkish caravan track, which cuts off a corner by crossing the hills, is the shorter in time as well as in distance, and is the more picturesque. A new bridge above Focha has already done away with the old ferry at Brod, and the road is to be continued until it reaches Gatchko. The old path, now buried in woods, now emerging on scattered farms and open meadows, climbs and winds over steep hillsides, then crosses a brow commanding an extensive prospect, and finally drops suddenly to a bridge over the stream that flows from the flanks of Maglich. Here stands a Turkish coffee-house. Henceforth there are fine views of the higher ranges in front, and before long the gorge begins. Limestone gorges are apt to be very similar in their main features. The distinction of the Sujeska is due to the very rugged character of the rocks, which break into splintered combs and teeth against the sky-line, and the way in which they are wooded. Dark pines, with stiff horizontal branches, perch on all the ledges, and there is no lack of deciduous foliage to give beauty and variety to the landscape.

The block-house of Suja, in which a good room is reserved for travellers, stands in a most romantic site in the very heart of the defile, where it expands for a space at the opening of a glen falling from Maglich. The forests around are full of chamois, deer, bears, wolves, and eagles.

At the head of the gorge the mountains almost meet, rising on either hand in great cliffs crowned by fantastic horns and pinnacles, and hugging the stream in so close a grip that the track is carried on a wooden balcony attached to the face of the cliff. This is the "Gate," barred and fortified in Turkish times. On the Austrian official survey the mountain on the north bears a name Tovarnich, which recalls memories of Dante. Have not the critics hunted in vain for a local habitation for the poet's Tabernicch?

> . . . se Tabernicch
> Vi fosse su caduto o Pietra Pana
> Non avria pur del orlo fatto cricch.

We have made acquaintance with Pietra Pana—the Pania della Croce; have we here found the evasive Tabernicch? The suggestion may at first sound fantastic. But let us see what a well-known traveller, de Déchy, has to say as to the former importance of this defile.[1]

"Even in the Middle Ages this route was extremely important, since—despite the descriptions which Ramberti (1533) gives of the ill-treatment of travellers here whether at the hands of customs officers or of robbers pure and simple—the merchants of the Adriatic coast transported by it their wares from Ragusa to Bosnia, to Servia, and even to Constantinople, and it is astonishing to read how in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the French Ambassadors to the Sublime Porte reached their destination by taking this route from the coast."

He goes on, "There is scarcely room beside the waters of the river for the small path between the walls of the gorge which are scarcely fifty paces apart. On the left hand in particular the bare rock precipices were terribly grand and descended nearly perpendicularly to the stony bed, along which bubbled the clear waters of the stream. This Gate once possessed its ‘ Keeper ’ or ‘ Guardian ’—Vrata in Sujeska—a name given in fifteenth-century documents to the castle, the ruined walls of which can still be seen on the edge of a cliff of the Volujik. Opposite this castle and on the left bank of the stream was another smaller one perched on a projecting spur. Duke Stephen (1435–60) established a customs station here, and bitter complaints were made by the men of Ragusa of attacks made by its occupants on the silver treasure that was being transported by the merchants of that great town. Both castles were hewn out of the living rock and accessible by a rugged path along which one person only could pass at a time A couple of men armed only with boulders of rock could easily hold this defile against a whole army and it was also customary to bar the way by means of a huge iron chain.”

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[1] See *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiv. p. 420.

So far de Déchy. It is surely obvious that a barrier presenting such remarkable natural and artificial features and lying across a high road of commerce was likely to impress itself on the memories of passers-by and to be a matter of description and discussion among the merchants of the Adriatic. The fame of its dangers and its rocks may very easily have reached Dante’s ears. He mentions the tombs at Pola, which unless he made some unrecorded journey to the eastern shores of the Adriatic he can have known only by hearsay. He needed a rhyme for *cricch*, may he not have caught at Tabernich ? No one at any rate has as yet suggested any plausible alternative, though every critic has made his effort.

I may take occasion to point out here, parenthetically, that no adequate materials exist for determining the time and place of Dante’s travels and sojourns in Alpine districts. He probably crossed the Alps in going or returning from Paris, he is said to have visited Germany, tradition and the commentators take him to the castle of Paratico near Brescia, to Val Lagarina in the Trentino, where he is reported to have written part of the *Commedia*. In the Apennines he spent some time in a castle in the hills of the Lunigiana behind Spezzia, and also near Gubbio in the heart of the peninsula. One of Ruskin's most wanton paradoxes is that Dante not only disliked mountains but proves himself by his works to have been "a notably bad climber." Neither point is worth arguing seriously, but the following passage is sufficient proof that the poet at least knew how to climb. An Alpine Club Committee might have passed him on the strength of it!

"When we had reached the broken ridge the guide turned to me with that pleasant look which I had noticed before at the foot of the mountain, and, after having first by a thorough inspection of the broken crag settled on some plan in his own mind, stretched out his arms and took hold of me. Then with the air of a man who while intent on the work in hand keeps an eye on the future, seeming always to be looking ahead, so lifting me on the top of one big boulder he looked out for another jag, saying, 'Get firm hold on that one now, but first make sure it will bear you.'" Presently Dante gets out of breath, but though the ground is "craggy, narrow and difficult and a good deal steeper than what had gone before, . . . he goes along talking so as not to seem nervous."[1]

Beyond the Gate the path traverses a broad pastoral basin and then climbs to a brow, the Cemerno Pass (4528 feet), occupied by a large Austrian fortress—there is a fort every five or ten miles along the Montenegrin frontier. It overlooks to the west the waterless undulations of the Herzegovina—a region where rocky reefs rise in endless succession, and there is more stone than grass. Gatchko, the first Herzegovinian townlet, lies in one of the broad level basins, girt by grey hills, characteristic of the Karst. It is a strange, monotonous country, with an air of the desert and the East about it, and, like the desert, capable of brilliant atmospheric effects.

A long day's drive ending in a steep descent leads to Trebinje, an old fortress lying on either bank of a sheet of green water, half river and half lake, in the centre of a little basin of rich vineyards and orchards, hemmed in on all sides by steep, bare, strange-shaped orange hills. The landscape is weird: it has a curious individuality more Asiatic than European; it falls into no class.

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[1] *Inferno*, c. 24. See also *Purgatorio*, cc. 3, 4, and 10.

Yet more striking, if less singular, is the approach to the Adriatic from the brow of the hills that girdle Trebinje. The road descends in "forthrights and meanders," sharp zigzags and long terraces, through a wilderness of cactus and heather, through olive gardens and vineyards to the broad sea-spaces. On the verge of the land shines Ragusa, a mediaeval port with its tiny harbour enclosed in massive fortifications and a wide moat in which the oleanders throw their red blossoms against the grey walls. On its public buildings and *palazzi* Venice has impressed her beautiful stamp. Its paved High Street serves, like the Piazza of St. Mark's, for the evening promenade of its citizens.

I know no seaport in Southern Europe that has so well preserved its character. This is largely due to the lucky chance by which its harbour has been superseded by the bay of Gravosa, a mile and a half distant and out of sight beyond a high promontory. It is there that the railway ends and commerce congregates, thence that the big steamers convey crowds of gaily-clad wild-looking emigrants bound for New York. The traveller who has been a witness of the ordeal that awaits "Eastern Europeans" on landing at Staten Island cannot but feel much compassion for these unconscious victims of Balkan unrest.

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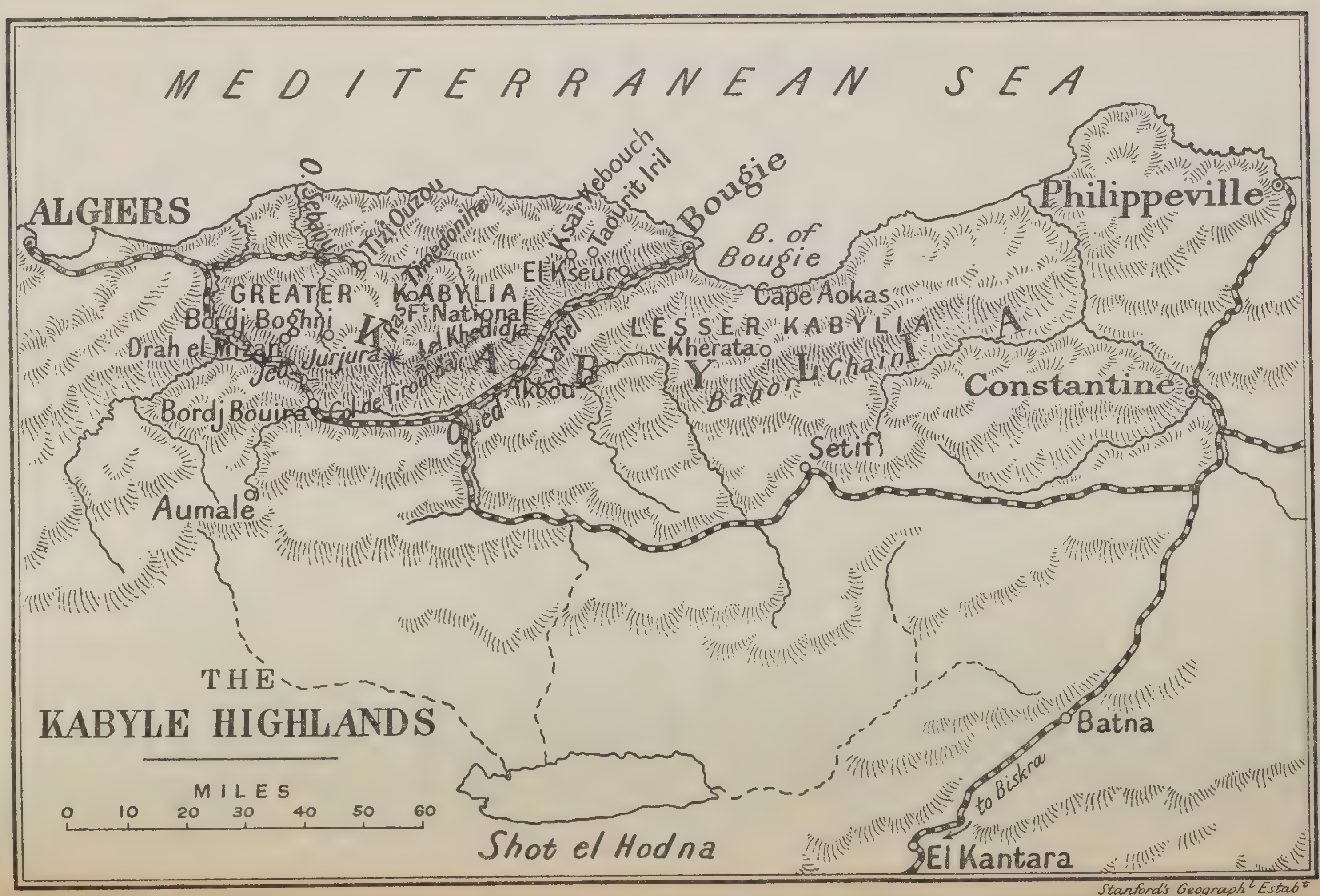
VI

THE KABYLE HIGHLANDS

BOUND for Africa! Magic words! For a land of light and warmth where spring is already melting into summer, where in May the roses will be in full bloom and the harvest at hand; where the sunny fountains of the Atlas roll between lanes of pink oleanders, where the date palms cluster round the limestone walls of El Kantara, the Golden Gate of the Sahara, where the Kabyle still lives in Homeric simplicity and costume under the snows of the Jurjura. I could hardly believe it, as a few hours after leaving the shadow of Mont Blanc, or the hardly less bitter rigours of an English Easter, François Dévouassoud and I basked on deck, while the dolphins leapt in our wake, and our steamer ran smoothly through the broad straits between Majorca and Minorca. On the right Majorca showed in the distance the bold mountain outline characteristic of Mediterranean islands. Minorca, close at hand on the left, lay low, with white cliffs and smooth rolling downs, a prosaic shore which must have seemed homelike to its English garrison in days gone by. During our first night on board the sky had changed. In place of the bright hard blue of Marseilles the vault overhead was liquid and suffused with sunshine, and little cherub-like cloudlets swam in its transparent depths, clouds such as we never see in the north, so far away, touched with such delicate tints of the palest amber.

But how came an old Alpine Clubman and his guide to have deserted the familiar playground, to be ending where the hero of Tarascon began? In the summer of 1885 I had chanced in a Normandy manor on the two charming volumes,



MEDITERRANEAN SEA
ALGIERS
O. Sebaou
Tizi Ouzou
Timedonine
Ksar Kebouch
Taourit Iril
Bougie
B. of Bougie
Philippeville
El Kseur
GREATER KABYLIA
Ft National
Ras
Bordj Boghni
Drah el Mizan
Jurjura
Jel
Id. Khedidja
Tirourdai
Col de Tirourdai
Bordj Bouira
Oued Sahel
Akbou
KABYLIA
LESSER KABYLIA
Cape Aokas
Kherata
Babor
Chain
Constantine
Setif
Aumale
THE KABYLE HIGHLANDS
MILES
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
Shot el Hodna
Batna
to Biskra
El Kantara

Stanford's Geograph^l Estab^t

Une Année dans le Sahel and *Un Été dans le Sahara*, by the French painter Fromentin. They had renewed in me the longing for primitive life, bright colours, and large horizons.

The first impression on landing at Algiers is that of a dream in which the most incongruous things have got mixed. The white mosque that fronts the port bears on its minaret not a muezzin, but a mechanical clock-face. There is no native bazaar, but stalwart Moors and Arabs sell fruit and vegetables side by side with hard-featured Alsatian market-women under an iron and glass roof that would be more in place at Havre. The pale golden tiers of flat-roofed native houses, the narrow staircase-lanes, and projecting timber-propped walls of the old town are half hidden by a boulevard and a couple of streets "worthy of Marseilles," as your exiled driver complacently remarks.

Like most Mediterranean cities, Algiers has an atmosphere of its own. In the mild spring days of my first landing it was wrapped in translucent milky vaporousness (which once or twice consolidated into quite opaque Scotch mist), and when I returned in brilliant summer weather the skies were still soft and silvery.

The characteristic quality of North African skies (in late spring) is their lack of positive colour. The sunshine seems beaten up and mixed into the atmosphere, which is mottled white overhead, near the horizon takes a purple bloom. The strongest blue is not, as in Provence, in the sky, but in the distant mountains. Their colour recalls that of the hills in Titian's backgrounds.

At the moment of our visit the Section de l'Atlas of the Club Alpin Français was receiving a visit from its French colleagues. In my hotel I saw a good deal of the honoured guests. Their arrival was an event; the town was illuminated, the Governor-General held receptions, the municipality gave balls. It was like a British Association Meeting in England, except that at Algiers there was more liveliness and less playing at lessons. In the prevailing excitement our humble presence passed unnoticed, and it was not until after our departure that one of the local news sheets, with magnificent inaccuracy, a quality in which the Algerian press surpasses even that of our own country, announced the arrival in his yacht of an English *milord* with a Swiss guide, who were about to start across the Sahara to, of all places in the world, Khartoum! A few months later the same paper recorded the death of "Sir Northcote, better known in early life as the Marquis of Salisbury."

At this point I am in a difficulty. My impulse is to write about what interested me most in a country which was all new to me. I should like to describe the descent to the Sahara—the first group of oases, above all Sidi Okba, where the traveller treading the halls of the native college feels in contact with African Islam in a very primitive form; the strange hill-fortress of Constantine, an ugly Orvieto, where French barracks have replaced historic monuments; the remote city of Tlemçen on the frontier of Morocco, the refuge of the last of the Moors, its rocks and waterfalls, its mosques and tombs, which rival Granada in the intricacy of their decoration, its lovely tawny-haired, pink-skinned children, and its motley crowd of gaudily bedecked negresses, wild Moroccans, and broad-hatted Bedouins.

But all these are "sights" on the common round of car-conveyed tourists, and I hasten to my proper theme, the mountains of Kabylia.

For the first ten days of my visit to Algeria it rained almost continuously on the coast, and to evade the deluge I made a dash by train and coach over the central highlands—where in May it was as bleak as Braemar—to Biskra—where it was as warm as Cadenabbia. We returned by Constantine to Philippeville, thence taking steamer to Bougie—a seaport some 50 miles east of Algiers.

The outlook on landing at dawn was gloomy. Under an inky sky a muddy sea lashed the quays. The inn we had been warned by some French fellow-travellers was a "lieu infecte." Moreover, its best rooms were engaged for a party of the Club Alpin which was expected to descend that evening from the by-ways of Kabylia.

At noon, the curtain of mist which had so long hung over us was lifted;—lifted, as it proved, for the season.

The Bay of Bougie is itself probably the finest piece of coast scenery in North Africa. The shore curves outwards so much towards its eastern cape that the spectator on the hills immediately above the town sees no water horizon.

The poet Campbell (so "Murray" informs travellers), with a condescension rare in Scotsmen, thought the landscape superior even to one of his northern lochs. The comparison, if strained, is not altogether meaningless. Mountains or hills, green, lofty, and showing few signs of culture or inhabitants, fall directly on the edge of the sea; and viewed from shipboard the southern character of the vegetation may be overlooked. But here all likeness ends. The distant ranges resemble in their elegant outlines the mountains of Lago Maggiore or Lago d' Iseo. The bold headland, rising 2200 feet above the waves, against which Bougie is built, is ablaze with flowers and a tangle of cactus and olive groves. Only where, on either side of the broad opening of the Oued Sahel, softer hills spread out green brows and hollows is there anything that suggests the scenery of the British Isles, and that vista is more suggestive of Cumberland than of the Highlands.

The town's greatest distinction, perhaps, is to have added a word to the French language. The long painted candles used in Moslem tombs were first exported from here for church use, and consequently became known as "bougies." In old times, before the barbarous hands of French engineers had destroyed the Moorish ramparts, when on the green hillside between the plane trees slender minarets pierced where now huge barracks sprawl, the town itself must have been a jewel in the landscape. Now the best one can do is to forget it as far as possible.

At Bougie we are already at the gate of Kabylia, the hill region named after the race who have, since history began, inhabited it. The great valley of the Oued Sahel, which here opens on the coast, cuts the district in half. The portion lying east of it is known as the Lesser Kabylia. This contains no conspicuous range snowy for half the year like that of the Jebel Jurjura, which forms the backbone of the Greater Kabylia.

The Kabyles are as interesting as their country. Their present name comes from an Arabic word, Kebail, meaning "The Tribes," and is that given them by their neighbours. They are a branch of the great Berber race which is found, and has been found as far back as history goes, over a wide extent of North Africa. Authors call them "indigenous," or "autochthonous," which is equivalent to saying that their advent was prehistorical. They have an alphabet and a written language of their own, but little literature beyond ballads. Their institutions are curiously democratic. Individual freedom is limited on all sides by the rule of the community. The controlling power is the Jemaa or assembly of all adult males, which meets once a week in the village hall. It elects an Amine or President and a Treasurer. The latter officer is said (by M. Reclus) to be taken always from the minority as a check on the Amine. Offences are punishable by fines payable in butcher's meat, and it is suggested that the sword—or knife—of justice is sometimes sharpened by the appetites of the judges.

The village, or community, is subordinate to the tribe. The tribal assembly consists, as a rule, of delegates from the villages. It acts as a Court of Appeal from the Jemaa when any case arises for which there is no provision made in the Kanouns or written code of Kabyle law. It also appoints a Kaid, or tribal headman, in emergencies such as war. The French have strengthened the authority, and increased the responsibilities, of the Kaids. When the tribe engaged in hostilities (I am describing the state of things before the completion of the French conquest) the villages had to give up their petty feuds. The constant fighting which went on in old days would have made all travel and intercourse difficult, but for a singular institution. This was the *anaia* ; a tribesman gave a token to the stranger which was equivalent to a pass through the district of the donor. Violation of the *anaia* was the worst breach of the social code a Kabyle could commit.

Their primitive religion has disappeared, or is cloaked under a profession of Mohammedanism. Their mosques are without architectural pretension, and their marabouts or priests usually of Arab extraction. They are as a rule far from devout. The answer made by a Kabyle to an enquiry why they so seldom visited their mosques, that "since Allah had abandoned them to the French it was clearly no use paying him any particular attention," shows a decidedly antique and tribal view of the relations between man and his Maker.

The villages are a network of dirty lanes, dividing one-storied huts, tiled in some parts, flat-roofed in the remoter mountains. The dwellings of the poor consist of only one room and stable combined: the well-to-do add a courtyard for the cattle and inner apartments for the women. Besides agriculture, the principal industries of the Kabyles are pottery, wood-carving, and the manufacture of silver and enamel ornaments.

In the old days government cost absolutely nothing. The only form of local taxation is the obligation to assist in supporting needy members of the community. Whoever kills a sheep or ox must reserve certain joints for the Unemployed or Incapable. A very high standard of mutual obligation is maintained. The Kabyle who did not share his provisions with a fellow-wayfarer would be but of ill-repute. Even strangers must be relieved; and it is recorded that in times of severe famine in North Africa no alien has been refused sustenance in the Kabyle villages. When the mountain passes are blocked by snow it is the custom for the upland villages to send out relief parties, and stock with provisions the huts of refuge erected for distressed travellers.

The Kabyles have for the most part one wife, though there is no prejudice against a man who can afford it having more. According to their proverbs it appears not to be the right thing to choose a wife from one's own village. The marriage customs have points in common with the Roman.

The possessions of a family are held in common, and are administered by the father, at his death by the son deemed to be the most capable of managing. The gains of each member of the family are thrown into a common fund. The women are excluded from any share in inheritance since, if the daughters inherited like their brothers, the division of goods would bring about the dispersal of the family fortune. It seems that property is already so divided that one tree is often shared between several proprietors, each owning a branch! There are said to be 350,000 Kabyles spread over the country, on an average of 90 to the square mile.

The costume of the Kabyles is similar to that we are familiar with in Greek monuments: a small cap, a tunic girt at the waist, sandals, and a large cloak. The women's dress is a large piece of home-made stuff draped and fastened at pleasure.

The Kabyle tribes have fallen an easy prey to foreign conquerors. If they resisted the French stubbornly and in 1871 rose savagely against them, these risings were due to an organisation probably springing from Moslem influences foreign to their native institutions. At the instigation of "holy men," important brotherhoods, or secret associations, succeeded in linking together the members of different tribes and forming a nucleus for national action.

Owing to the expected arrival of the Alpinists no carriages were to be had at Bougie. With every stream in flood hill-climbing, for the next forty-eight hours at least, seemed risky. But before us, winding invitingly along the green shores of the bay, stretched the road to the famous gorge of the Châbet el Akra, which divides the hills of Lesser Kabylia. We were well content to walk the first stage of seventeen miles. In crossing the Oued Sahel we were more than once up to our knees in water, where the flooded streams had spread over the highway. The sea, always close at hand, was often hidden by a dense scrub of wild myrtles, oleanders, and cork trees, broken in places by farm-lands, or where a piece of the wilderness was being rooted up to make room for vines. We rested on a knoll beneath which bold rocks broke the dark blue waves beyond whose expanse rose the mountain headland and white buildings of Bougie. Then the road, after bending inland to cross a torrent issuing from a narrow glen, begins to climb the steep aloe-fringed face of Cape Aokas, *ἀοικος*, a Greek name! It soon becomes a mere groove in the side of the cliff, and the view from the corner where it is cut through the nose of the promontory is worthy to compare with any more famous *Cornici*. On the farther side an alluvial flat again intervenes between the mountains and the sea. At this point we met a jackal which, owing to the amount of water in the roadside ditches, was much embarrassed to get out of our way. A mile or two farther we found lodging for the night in the post-station, a shanty of the roughest kind.

At daybreak we were again on the move. The first object of interest was a paddock full of ostriches brought from the Sahara. Where the road, meeting a broad stream, turned suddenly inland to follow its course into the mountains, we came upon a large Kabyle market. It was being held on a bare knoll in the centre of a wild and lovely landscape. Among the wooded slopes and rocks and glens there seemed at first sight no sign of habitation. Only on careful search a cluster of brown huts might here and there be distinguished on the hillsides. There were a few carts, but most of the marketers had come on foot or horseback. Cattle and poultry seemed the principal objects of exchange. The Kabyles wore long cloaks with peaked hoods, now drawn up as a protection from the morning chill. From a distance the fair resembled a flock of white seabirds; on closer approach it resolved itself into a series of animated figures, recalling Flaxman's illustrations to Homer in their costumes and directness of gesture.

The scenery, as our road wound among the wild olives and evergreen oaks of the river bank, was delightful. The hills encircling us, outliers of the Babor chain, resembled those of North Italy about Varallo in their variety and symmetry of outline. But here, except for the high road, Nature was unadorned by any signs of her subjugation by man. The river was undyked, the hills uncultivated, and their slopes were covered with primeval forest ranging from the oleanders of the stream bed through cactus hedges, dwarf palms, and cork woods up to the olives and the mountain pines.

The road was presently blocked by an earth-slip, which a large Kabyle gang was attacking. On the farther side a carriage from Kherata was waiting on the chance of passengers, and the driver was glad to take us up. Soon the hills closed in front and passing some drinking shops and an orange garden the road entered the gorge of the Châbet el Akra. I have seen a great many gorges and may pretend to a critical taste in them. There are some, which delight the childish love of the unusual and fantastic, where the stream pierces a crack, and the road fights for a way beside it. Others are romantic and picturesque: they charm the eye by their colouring, their variety, their combination of wood and crag and water, their sudden vistas up side glens or of lofty summits. The Châbet is long and narrow throughout, the colouring of the limestone rocks is rich, their shapes are bold, the vegetation is superb and characteristic. Wild olives mingle with mountain pines, snow-streaked peaks swimming in African sunshine peer down into the ravine. There are petrifications, one held to resemble a Madonna and Child, for the curious. Above the heart of the defile towers an isolated crag said to have been climbed by a Kabyle for a reward of 100 francs. The recompense seemed to us exaggerated. At the top of the Châbet stands the village of Kherata with a good inn, the half-way house between Bougie and Setif. This is the best headquarters for exploring Lesser Kabylia.

We drove back to Bougie, enjoying a second view of the Châbet. In its midst we encountered three diligences—the vanguard of the Alpinists. Lower down we met the main army. Flags waved and horns blew, as we drove quickly past, unobserved by at least a third of the company who, happily unconscious that a note-making "chiel" was on the road, had their heads buried in polychromatic handkerchiefs, which doubtless assisted them to highly coloured dreams of Algerian landscape. The procession must have included everything on wheels that Bougie could muster.

There are several ways of crossing the hills of Greater Kabylia from Bougie to Fort National. The easiest is to drive up the broad Oued Sahel as far as Akbou and take the carriage-road over the Col de Tirourda. The most direct starts from El Kseur (or Bitsche as the French call the place) eighteen miles inland, and is for the most part a rough forest track.

At El Kseur we secured a fine-looking Kabyle and his mule. Our guide promised to take us to sleep that night at one of his people's villages and to bring us on the second day to the Fort.

The first stage of our journey was to Taourirt Iril, a steep ascent of thirteen miles, and 3000 feet. It was really warm, as hot as an Italian valley in August, as we mounted the bare slopes behind El Kseur. For several miles we followed a long narrow glen, densely clothed with evergreen oaks and cork trees. From the head of the glen our path ascended in steep zigzags to a sawmill, and thence still higher to Taourirt Iril, a blockhouse planted on the top of a lofty spur and commanding noble views in every direction, particularly towards the coast and the mountains of Lesser Kabylia. In winter the inhabitants are often almost cut off by snow from the rest of the world, and even in May these heights are frequently enveloped in mist—as the poor Alpinists had lately learnt to their cost. We asked the woman who gave us coffee if a number of tourists had not passed three days before. "Ah, yes, Monsieur," she replied, "such a pity: the fog was so thick we did not even see them go through. What a spectacle we lost!"

So far we had followed an unfinished cart road. Henceforth we were dependent on forest tracks. These crossed one another in all directions and the right route would have been quite undiscoverable without our guide. Morning clouds tempered the sunshine, and the air at this height was delicious as we strolled on over a broad upland among great bushes of tall white heather, enjoying wide prospects over the sunny hills, or down valleys green with corn and thickly studded with Kabyle villages to the blue bays of the Mediterranean. Presently we passed the ruins of a considerable structure of Roman origin built of squared stones, probably a fortress. It is known as Ksar (Caesarea?)

Kebouch and stands 3640 feet above the sea. Here the final ascent and the great forest began together. Deciduous oaks in their first burst of foliage shaded the path: higher up the branches were still red with unopened buds, or only delicately fringed with yellow green. At about 4000 feet we gained the crest of the range which we followed for some distance. The forest now opened and left place for glades where jonquils, forget-me-nots, and delicate yellow tulips brightened the ground, and glimpses opened down a new valley, fertile and well cultivated to the sea. On the highest ground stood another small building, a watch or beacon tower, apparently also of Roman construction.

Among the thickets some wild animal, perhaps a panther, crossed our path. François alone saw it, but the strong smell of Zoological Gardens it left behind was sufficient proof of its presence. A little farther we caught a glimpse of the snowy rock-peaks of the Jebel Jurjura and the bare valley of the Sebaou. The path had long been slippery; in the descent it was alternately a torrent and a quagmire. At last it issued from the vast forest, and we came upon Kabyles labouring on unfenced patches of cornland, scattered here and there among a great expanse of waste covered with a noble heath, growing high enough to hide a man and now in full glory of white blossom. The whole of the Kabylia of Jurjura was spread before us on the farther side of the Oued Sebaou.

High on the hillside before us, under a spine of projecting crags, a number of native huts clustered like swallows' nests against the rocks. This was Tiflit, our night's resting-place. The dwellings were built of stone, of one story and most of them of one room, tile-roofed, but for the rest, in dimensions and general appearance not unlike the *malghe* of the Trentino Alps. The ground near at hand was cultivated and under the shadow of a group of noble trees children were amicably consorting with donkeys, and groups of men, sitting on the platforms outside the houses, seemed waiting for a subject of conversation to turn up.

Our Kabyle led us up a narrow lane to the door of the headman or Kaid. The greeting between the former and our host was quite Homeric—*ἔπος τ᾽ ἔφατ᾽, ἐκ τ᾽ ὀνόμαζεν.* First a formal salutation was uttered, and then the name of the person saluted pronounced with emphasis, and the accompaniment of the usual gesture of touching hands and afterwards the forehead and heart.

The Kaid had a hall or outer apartment to his house, which was placed at our disposal. French influence showed itself in a broken table and candles. Otherwise all was of native simplicity. The earthen floor had in one corner a shallow depression some six feet square for the fire, and those who liked to lie by it. The smoke found its way out anyhow. "Absinthe mafish." "No absinthe," apologised our host, to which our guide replied: "The stranger is not a Frenchman, for he drinks no absinthe and walks like a Kabyle." At nightfall the Kaid and some neighbours said their prayers, and made their prostrations on a stone platform outside the gate, while the voice of the marabout from some unseen standpoint—no mosque was noticeable—resounded through the stillness. Then the goats clattered in to join the women in some interior premises. Presently "couscous" was brought out and François and I and the two Kabyles sat down, a *partie carrée* round the big bowl. I could not imagine Priam and Ulysses better represented than by my two neighbours. The Kaid might have appeared successfully on any classical stage as Priam. Our guide came very near my idea of Ulysses. He was a man of middle age, tall, sunburnt, and sinewy: he carried François, who weighed at least 14 stone, over a stream with the greatest ease. In his demeanour and in the way in which he draped his cloak there was a certain nobility; at the same time there was something in his look which made one suspect that in case of need his strength would find adequate support in his wits. In his tranquil and natural manner he supplied a contrast to the mule-driver whom we engaged for our farther tour from Fort National, who exhibited all the failings which contact with another form of civilisation is wont to produce among a primitive race. They had one trick in common, that of clicking their tongue in the middle of a sentence, as an European driver does when he wants to encourage his horses. This is a habit very prevalent among African races.

When supper was over the Kaid retired into the inner apartments, some retainers swept together the glowing ashes into a heap and laid themselves down beside them, while we settled ourselves as comfortably as might be for the night with cushions and coverlets.

Soon after daybreak we were on the road. Our path kept on the heights north of the Sebaou. The stream flowed deep below us in a broad bare valley. Beyond it spread a maze of brown ravines and green hillocks on whose ridges were perched native villages. On the highest spur the white buildings of Fort National were conspicuous. This part of Kabylia north of the Sebaou is sparsely inhabited and scantily cultivated. To find a bridge over the stream it is necessary to make a wide circuit. Our guide preferred a direct path leading to the village of Djema el Saharidj. We found the ford practicable, though the water reached nearly to our waists. A peasant who pointed out to us the easiest passage told me that a week before a party of seven men who had attempted to cross, holding on hand to hand, had been all swept away and drowned.

After this refreshing incident we tramped for a time across bare, bald, sunbaked undulations, a landscape that might have been in Syria. Its dreariness added to the effect of the glorious vegetation of the gardens that surround Djema el Saharidj. They seemed to me to surpass in fertility even those of Palermo or Damascus. Abundant streams gushing out of the hills water a broad northward-facing slope. The track becomes a lane between high hedges of dog-roses, prickly pears, vines, mesembryanthemum, travellers' joy. The fig trees and olives are of double their ordinary size in Europe. The vines are rampant ; climbing to the tops of the tallest elms or planes and hanging down in long festoons from their branches. Ferns grow luxuriantly, and the ground is bright with wildflowers. Great bushes of golden - eyed daisies recall the gardens of the Riviera.

On the green in the centre of the village the substructures of a Roman temple may be traced. Here also are two missionary establishments, a Catholic and a Scottish. The result on the Kabyle mind of the conflict of the churches would be curious to learn. Outside the oasis on a bare clay slope lies the new French colony, a collection of boxes, placed at right angles, raw, hideous, shadeless. It rests its hopes for the future on its vineyards. The phylloxera at home was a chief source of progress in Algerian viticulture and led to immense quantities of Algerian wine being shipped and baptized at Bordeaux.

A mile over heavy clay-lands brought us to the foot of the steep ascent of 2000 feet which leads to Fort National. The path, a sunk lane which disdained zigzags, led us between fig and olive gardens shaded by evergreen oaks, the leaves of which serve the Kabyles for fodder. It was market day at the Fort and we met a stream of natives, lithe-limbed figures, returning with their purchases to their several villages.

The hills of the foreground resembled in general the lower slopes of the Tuscan Apennine. Their brown flanks were full of folds, lightly wooded or terraced in fig-gardens, olive-yards, and vineyards. White villages crowded on their crests. Multiply indefinitely these features, ridge behind ridge, glen beyond glen, village upon village, and you have the characteristic landscape of central Kabylia. To the north beyond the bare valley of the Sebaou and the forested ridges of the coast hills spread the shining expanse of the sea. In the opposite direction the yellow crags and white snows of the Jebel Jurjura fringed the horizon. Though individually bold, they do not form a serrated sky-line, the highest pinnacles being as a rule not the sharpest. The top only of Lella Khedidja, the loftiest summit of the Jurjura, showed over the main chain, where the latter begins to sink towards the Col de Tirourda.

Internally, Greater Kabylia is bisected from east to west by the valley of the Sebaou and by a broad depression (along which no river or road runs) which lies at the northern base of the Jebel Jurjura. The streams from the Jurjura cross this depression at right angles, and flow away into a perfect labyrinth of foot-hills. This region of lesser undulations is the most populous district in Kabylia. The Zaouia, from which the Zouaves got their name, forms part of it. The mountain fastnesses contain less civilised tribes and ruder villages.

The only reference I could discover to the central group of the Jurjura was in a little local handbook where the author, M. Ficheur, describing the panorama from Fort National, refers to it in the following sentences :

" To the south is the massif of the Ait Irguen which forms the most majestic, and may be considered the most important portion of the chain. The highest points (Ras Timedouin and Halouen) attain 2300 mètres (7546 feet)."

After watching from the ramparts of the Fort a superb sunset we were glad to leave the vultures, which circled overhead, to undisturbed enjoyment of the icy wind, and to retire to a good log fire. At six next morning a Kabyle and his mule were at the door, our baggage was soon packed, and we set off—in the wrong direction. I turned to the right-about. Not at all disconcerted our guide murmured, " La même chose." I took him to a knoll beyond the ramparts and pointed out the conspicuous mountain we desired to reach. " Lella Khedidja," murmured the guide. " Not at all," said I, " that one," pointing many degrees farther west. " La même chose," the little man politely interposed.

François and I happily understood from past experience how to treat this type of Oriental. We took a close eye-survey of the route from our vantage-ground and told the guide that all we required of him was that he should follow us without question. For the first four miles we kept to the good road which leads to the Col de Tirourda. It winds along at a level just under the spur on the extremity of which Fort National stands. I never enjoyed a more delicious walk. The frosty mountain air was tempered by the May sunshine. Deep below us lay now a deep glen, green with opening fig leaves or silvered with olive trees ; now a narrow hogsback of brown rock crowded with fortress-villages. Morning shadows threw into relief the bold buttresses and the massive outline of the Jurjura, which grew more imposing at every step as we approached it. On leaving the high road a rough but broad and much used native path led us down in steep zigzags to the deep-cut valley. The stream at the bottom was fringed by oleanders just showing colour in their buds. The water was running strong, and it was as much as a party of women and boys could do to stem it. The last boy had a particularly bad time, as his companions seized the opportunity when he was in the middle of the ford to stone him playfully.

Narrow, excessively steep horse lanes, through gardens of oranges and pomegranates shaded by high-clambering vines, led us up to the next brow, occupied by the large and numerous villages of the Beni Janni. There were three within half a mile at the spot where we reached the crest. In the neighbourhood of each were a number of the beehive-shaped wattled huts used by the Kabyles for storing their crops. Passing a fountain, frequented by many women with classical-shaped water-jars, we came to a narrow platform on the ridge itself, irregularly paved with small flat stones. It was the cemetery. Leaving on our right the largest village, we halted under a sycamore near an adjoining hamlet for our lunch. We soon had a circle of sightseers squatted round us and another circle—the gallery—in the branches overhead. In England such popular admiration is reserved for the members of a travelling circus. One boy of about fourteen was active in getting us eggs from a neighbouring cottage. When we left he called after us down the hill, and looking back we saw him making emphatic but unintelligible gestures. Our muleteer declared that he was professing himself to be an orphan, and ready to follow us if we would adopt him.

Another steep descent of 1500 feet, past more villages and through plots of wheat and tobacco, brought us to the second glen we had to cross. After following up the torrent for a short distance we forded it and began ascending into the more open region on its left bank. We had attained the eastern end of the broad depression already mentioned, which runs along much of the north flank of Jebel Jurjura and separates it from the labyrinthine foot-hills. The outer range of the Jurjura was now close at hand. The view along it was singular and attractive. The lower slopes are richly clothed in oak and olive woods, tusks of rock project halfway up the mountain-side, and villages are planted on every natural vantage-ground for defence.

Our immediate object was a large hamlet (the Kournez of the map) we had distinguished from Fort National as one of the nearest to our peak in sight. The houses, unlike those of the villages we had previously passed, were all flat-roofed, and the roof of one formed the terrace of the next above it. The entrance to the village was by a rude gateway loopholed for guns. Where two lanes met, stood the Jemaa, the most primitive possible public meeting hall, a mud hut, the roof of which was supported on large trunks. Wild-looking men were lounging on earthen benches. We questioned them through our muleteer, and learnt that there were several more villages higher up in the mountains.

It must be remembered that we had no tolerable map—because at that date no tolerable map existed. It was therefore a surprise to us to discover, as we now did, that the bold crest of rock, on the eastern spur of which Kournez stands, is separated from the main chain by a long and deep glen running far into the heart of the range and right up to the foot of our peak. We pursued a terrace path high above the stream of this hidden valley. Our way led among gardens watered by numerous brooks and overhung by tawny cactus-wreathed crags, from which, in autumn, troops of monkeys descend to rob the fruit. Spring flowers have no attraction for them, and we consequently saw none. We were now opposite and nearly on a level with the base of the rocky spires of Taletat, the lowest of which is conspicuous from the neighbourhood of the Col de Tirourda and has therefore been photographed. It is, however, far from the finest of the rock aiguilles (locally called Azerou) which adorn the northern flank of the Jurjura.

Passing in succession a whole range of pale lemon-coloured domes and spires, we drew close to the broader cliffs of the culminating peak of this part of the chain. A group of cottages appeared opportunely, and it seemed time to halt. The people, however, were far from anxious to receive us, and a long debate ensued. They suggested that we should go on for another hour to the chief village of their tribe, where the Kaid dwelt and had a proper guest-chamber. Had we known the local topography better we might have followed their advice. As it was we persisted in remaining where we were, and it was arranged that a family should be evicted for us. While the removal was being effected we were begged to make ourselves comfortable on the house roof. This terrace commanded a noble view down the valley up which we had come. Along its southern flank were ranged all the finest peaks of the Jurjura. My companion compared the view to that from San Martino di Castrozza looking towards Primiero. The African summits are 2000 feet lower, but so also are the villages at their base. They are, however, less fantastic and simpler in their outlines, and more comparable, geologically, probably, as well as picturesquely, to the crags of Carrara. The nearest summit was a very close counterpart of the noble Pizzo d' Uccello, the northernmost peak of the Italian range.

The house which served as our quarters was a square flat-roofed building of sun-dried mud. The roof was supported by massive beams, which must be essential during the winter snows. A long low earthen bench ran under one wall. In the corner a rough basket was lightly suspended from a pole—the family cradle. Opposite the bench, filling nearly half the single room, was a raised platform into which were let three enormous jars, each nearly as high as the roof. These are used for storing corn and oil and olives. Under this platform was the stable. When evening came some cows entered on us, and turned down a passage leading into the subterranean den. Their heads loomed through two apertures in its front with a most pre-Raphaelesque effect, while François in the middle represented St. Joseph. The donkey, as a more social being and nearer humanity, was privileged to stand in the stable passage with his forequarters in the room, where he could see all that went on and join in the conversation, a privilege of which he took undue advantage. A cat—François declared, a two-legged one!—ate our fowl, and we were reduced to some very bad kouskous for supper. Wrapped in an old plaid I got such sleep as the cows and the ass and lesser neighbours (including two or three Kabyles) allowed. It was not very much, and I was out in time to see the morning star sail gloriously forth from behind the peaks of the Jurjura. We made a cup of tea and were quickly off into the twilight. Stumbling in the dark down a staircase of a path to the stream, we breasted the steep opposite hillside. Over scrub and pasture, past some mounds which may be ancient moraines but may also be remains of falls from the upper cliffs, we gained height quickly. In an hour and a half we were at the base of a sharp rock aiguille and close to the cliffs that form a belt round the broad bulk of Ras Timedouin. We had noticed in the distant view from Fort National that snow lay in two places in fans at their base ; and being mountaineers we had inferred that where snow came down there was likely to be a gully and a way up. As we expected, when we had climbed to the higher of these snow-beds a practicable breach became visible. It was only too practicable—there was even a faint goat-herd's track. Above this gate—or chimney—we saw our way open to the top. The slopes all the way were steep—steep enough to allow of continual glissades in the descent, but there was no sort of difficulty. In ascending we kept to the bare ground, where we found a few pansies, but no Alpine flowers. It was probably a fortnight too early for botanising at this height. Lower down the turf was gay with a small deep blue flower which a good way off might be taken for a gentian. But on the whole the wildflowers were not equal to the tulips, narcissi, and forget-me-nots we had found in the forests north of the Sebaou, and the great thickets of white heather were also absent.

In three hours from our sleeping quarters we were on the top of our peak. Tops rather, I should say, for it had several, all of which we visited. The highest crest was made up of a series of huge caldrons half filled with snow, such as are common in the limestone mountains of Savoy or among the Karrenfelds of the Eastern Alps. On the farthest top were several rings of stones, each block about the size of a man's head. This arrangement was obviously artificial and barbaric—Kabyle goat-herds had preceded us. But was ours the first ascent by Europeans? At any rate, as far as I know, there is no record to the contrary, literary or local, though it seems hard to believe that the French engineers had not visited so conspicuous a summit.

The view had a double interest, topographical and picturesque. We saw now for the first time the true relations of the peaks, passes, and valleys of the heart of the Jurjura, and how completely they had been misrepresented on all published maps. Right under us, at the very base of our peak, was a broad col, its summit an open plateau like that of the Gemmi. A well-marked horse path led over it and away to the west towards a long patch of dark green on the mountain flank. In this I recognised the forest of Borj Bouira, said to harbour the last of the lions, and notoriously a great resort of panthers. North of this pass, the valley we had left was closed by a comparatively low ridge, crowned by a large village. West of it, under the pass, lay a well-cultivated and inhabited circular bowl, almost entirely surrounded by crags, the stream from which burst through the outer range by a trackless and impassable cleft. A path from the large village descended into the basin and rose again to a break in the rocks on the farther side whence we surmised, correctly, as it turned out, it descended in the direction of Borj Boghni. Beyond the pass rose a bold confused block of rock-peaks known as Haidzar. The southern face of our peak was precipitous, and the whole chain fell steeply to the broad bare uplands of the Oued Sahel which we had driven over ten days before in mist and rain. We saw a train start from the temporary terminus towards Constantine, but in the vast range of the panorama its progress while we were on the top was hardly noticeable to the naked eye! This may be partly explained by the fact that twelve miles an hour is thought a good average pace for an Algerian express! On this side we discovered directly beneath us on one of the spurs of our mountain a very fine cedar forest. Two of the trees standing out on the top of a ridge seemed to be of remarkable dimensions.

Eastward we looked over the tops of the finest part of the range, the domes and spires of Taletat and its neighbours, to Lella Khedidja. That summit appeared, what it has been measured, something less than fifty feet higher (ten feet or three mètres is the official difference) than ourselves. From this point of view it is an imposing dark pyramid, falling very abruptly to the south.

The air after the spring rains was absolutely clear, and the distant panorama was prodigious; not picturesque—except in one direction, but most interesting and impressive. The picturesque side was where (beyond the nearest rock aiguille and over the shoulders of Lella Khedidja) we saw the three peaks of Lesser Kabylia and the mountain horns of the Bay of Bougie dwarfed to ordinary capes, and rising out of leagues of Mediterranean. The sea stretched across the whole northern horizon; eastward under the morning sun its surface was silver, to the west a grey blue. In this direction, sixty-five miles distant yet comparatively in the foreground, Algiers and its suburbs were conspicuously visible. We could even distinguish the golden tint and pyramidal form of the native town from the white French façade and villas. My acquaintance with Algerian landmarks is not sufficient to indicate the breadth of our vision. A mathematician may make out its limits by a simple calculation. We saw as far as our height and the roundness of the earth would let us. For miles and miles the ridge of the Lesser Atlas, that is the seaward edge of the plateau which divides the sea and the Sahara, stretched away to the west, a chain like the Jura devoid of peaks. Due south spread the Algerian uplands, an expanse of high bare plains and low bare hills. On one of these we recognised the military town of Aumale.

Beyond the last plain and southward ridge there was nothing—nothing but the golden haze of the Sahara. We looked across the whole breadth of Algeria from sea to desert.

After an hour's enjoyment of the wide prospect we shot down the snow-beds, and after halting for a bath in an oleander-sheltered pool were back with our baggage by 10 A.M. Our mule-driver enquired where had we been, "As far as the foot of the cliffs?" "To the top of the snows," we replied in a tone of quiet rebuke. "La même chose," he imperturbably replied, adding the slightly incredible statement that he had suffered from great anxiety, and had been on the point of organising a search-party to look for us.

I had decided on the top to take the path leading upwards and westwards across the bowl-shaped dale. An hour's ascent of steep cultivated slopes and meadows brought us to the large village of Taguemout on the saddle at the head of our valley. From it a zigzag track climbs to the pass of the Ait Irguen.

The Amine or headman of the place came forth to greet us, and urged us to halt and refresh ourselves. On our declining, he deputed a villager to accompany us through his territory. It was a short and pleasant walk over ploughed land, where white-robed Kabyles were busily engaged with the most primitive agricultural implements, to the gap by which our way would pass from these mountain recesses into the outer world. Despite the noonday sun the wind in the gap was too keen for us to halt long. Far below lay the broad northern valley and beyond it the village-crested labyrinth of the foot-hills.

The hillside was steep and bare, except where a cluster of bushes shaded the source of a spring. The terrace track turned after a time into a corkscrew, the twists of which brought us down again among the usual olives and fig gardens and cactus hedges. Following a short spur we came upon a village, a filthy swallow's nest. Thence we made the circuit of a deep hollow, passing near a second village, the women of which were at work crushing olive berries in a very rude mill. At the foot of the last descent we found a strong stream, which we crossed by a bridge. In the freshness of its banks we rested for a space, for the heat of the sun was now excessive. On our left a broad bare hill sloped away from us; high up on it were several villages. Instead of mounting towards them we took a path nearly due north. The ground was heavy clay, and a good deal of it cornland. After the rains every hollow was a quagmire, through which our unlucky animal had to struggle as best it could. At last we hit a track running east and west and connecting Fort National with Borj Boghni. It seems strange that this, to the uninitiated eye, extremely important strategic route running through open country along the whole of the northern base of the Jebel and separating the tribes of the mountain from those of the foot-hills, has not been made into a road by the French. The Romans saw its advantages, and their pavement, now rooted up and lying in a white line like a ribbon of sea beach across the brown hills, afforded an uncomfortable alternative when the mud became too deep.

At last about 4 P.M., very hot and rather weary, we reached the spot marked "Café" on our map. The civilised expression had conveyed to my mind a great deal too much. Café there was, excellent Turkish café in little cups, but the roadside shed provided nothing else, not even drinkable water or lemonade for thirsty men. However, whether from the virtues of the coffee, or the descent of the sun and the renewed vivacity of the air, we went on our way mightily refreshed, and quite determined (despite our companion's repeated suggestions that it would be "la même chose" if we slept somewhere short) to walk on the three hours to Borj Boghni. For the first half-hour or so the road was what we should call at home a water-lane, and there was almost more water than lane. But the country sloping westward—the café stood on a watershed—was fertile and well wooded, and the crags of the Jurjura to the left gave character to the landscape. As we went on the lane improved and finally turned into an unpicturesque French road. Its straight lines and stone heaps made us (with the usual inconsistency of travellers towards the end of a long day) almost regret the boulders and high hedges and grassy short cuts of the old path we had just been reviling. The country was now a great garden of fruit trees and olive yards, well irrigated by the waters of the numerous streams flowing from the Jurjura.

At the foot of a long wooded descent Borj Boghni came into view, one of the unfinished-looking arrangements of low white boxes which constitute a French colony. The situation appears to be malarious, but the inhabitants assured us that the fevers which had prevailed during the first years of the settlement had almost entirely disappeared. Here as elsewhere eucalyptus has been extensively planted. The Haidzar group is well seen to the south and Borj Boghni would be the best quarters for a visit to it. But the site is in no way particularly picturesque or fertile. The colonies in Kabylia having been founded before the Kabyles were dispossessed, or partially dispossessed, of their lands, have mostly been placed in inferior situations, rejected by the natives. There is a market held here, which the Kabyles attend in large numbers, and the money they spend in drink goes far to support the aubergistes. We found clean beds and good fare at a homely roadside inn kept by a widow. Next day we drove to Drah el Mizan, a fortified country town which stood a siege in the great rebellion of 1871. The Kabyles might possibly have carried it by numbers, but our driver told us that their weak point as besiegers was that each party would only remain as long as their saddle-bags held out, and, these exhausted, went back to their homes again for fresh provisions.

The low ridge over which the road to the railway station passes commands a fine view of Kabylia and the Jurjura. Our peak and its attendant aiguille were perfectly unmistakable and their outline was identical with that of the summit commonly but wrongly pointed out at Algiers as Lella Khedidja.

Our modest tramp was at an end and I may summarise the impressions left on my memory.

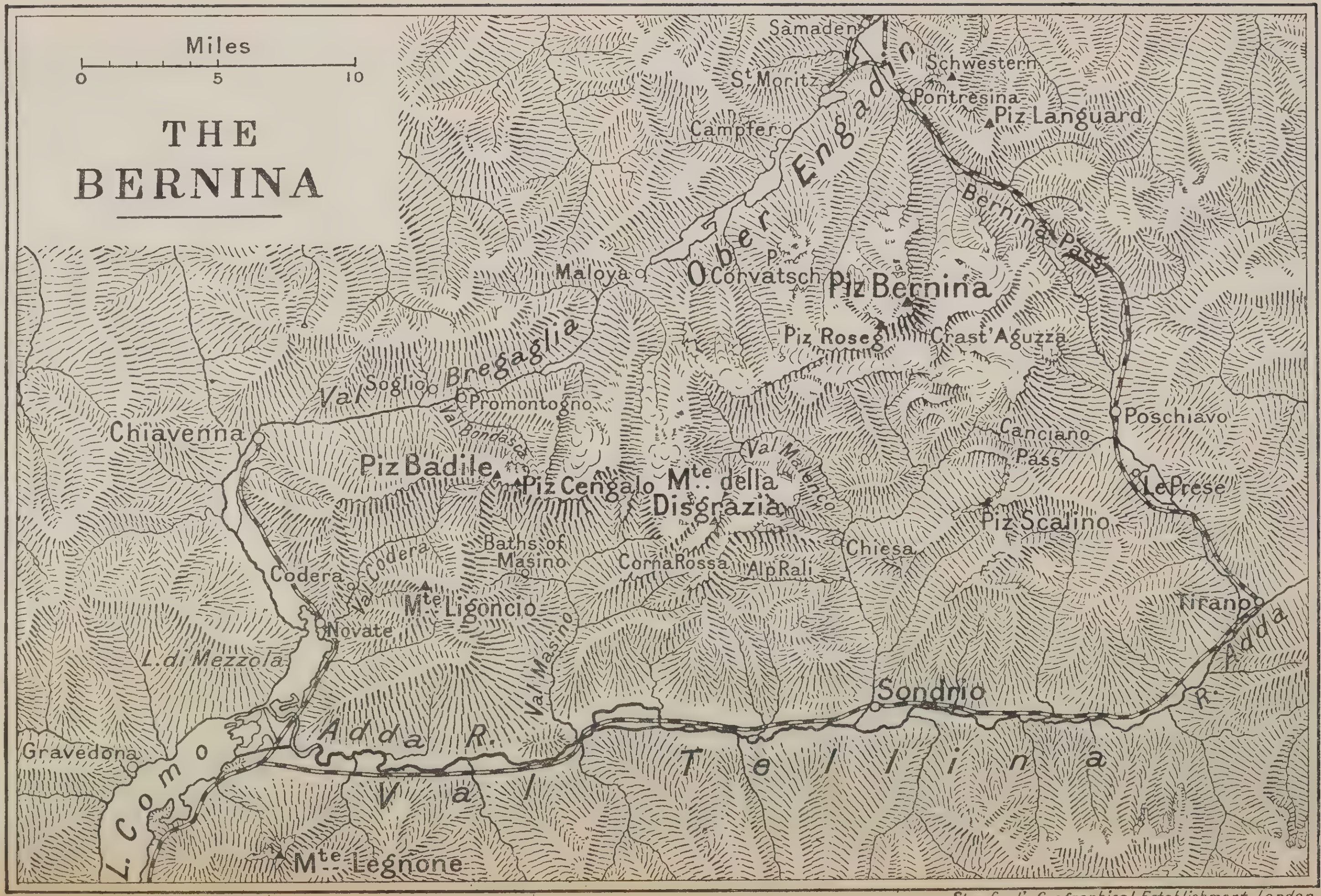
Algeria, as a whole, I picture as a region of no exceptional beauty. Large expanses of the uplands that separate the Sea and the Desert are monotonous in character. The mountains that gird them lack, as a rule, the variety and nobility of form and outline that distinguish those of Greece. But it contains districts of great interest, amongst which must be counted those we have been exploring, the coast of Bougie and the hills of the Kabyles. Trains and cars have now done away with the distances which, when they had to be encountered in the slowest of coaches, were a serious drawback to travel. Algeria supplies change not only of climate but of surroundings. It is something to be able, on the third day after leaving Charing Cross, to be discussing "kouskous" in the Homeric simplicity of a Kabyle village.

VII

BEHIND THE BERNINA

THE Japanese, like the ancient Jews, worship in high places and treat the pilgrimage to their highest mountains, Fujiyama and Ontaki, as a spiritual exercise. Leslie Stephen, when he found himself again among the Bernese Alps, "felt more like a believer in a cathedral than he had ever done before." But these are exceptions. It would be rash to impute to the crowd of climbers who rush to the Alps every summer religious emotion as a primary moving impulse. More elementary and primitive instincts of human nature lie at the root of most modern mountaineering.

There is the instinct of every healthy child to get to the top of the nearest mound or sand-heap, and then to roll down again. There is further the craving of the more intelligent infant to get to the other side of things. The vigorous adult satisfies these longings by climbing over peaks and passes. There is more excitement and exhilaration in the peak; but it may be maintained that to a refined taste there must be more subtle and lasting enjoyment in the pass. The approach to a crest which has long barred our range of vision is always fraught with a dramatic interest. In a new or unexplored district there is the practical question of the nature of the ground, slope or precipice on the other side. There is always the pictorial interest of the new landscape which is suddenly unfolded as the ground drops from under our feet, and our horizon is suddenly shifted. The descent into a strange valley through a landscape differing in colour, in expression, in features, in foliage, and in fertility from that we left in the morning, among people of another race


THE BERNINA
Miles
0
5
10
Samaden
St. Moritz
Schwestern
Pontresina
Piz Languard
Campfer
Ober Engadin
Bernina Pass
Maloya
P. Corvatsch
Piz Bernina
Piz Roseg
Crast' Aguzza
Poschiavo
Canciano Pass
Le Prese
Piz Scalino
Val Bregaglia
Soglio
Promontogno
Val Bondasca
Chiavenna
Piz Badile
Piz Cengalo
Mte. della Disgrazia
Val Malenco
Chiesa
Baths of Masino
Corna Rossa
Alp Rali
Val Codera
Codera
Mte. Ligoncio
Novate
Val Masino
L. di Mezzola
Tirano
Adda R.
Sondrio
Gravedona
L. Como
Val Tellina
Mte. Legnone

Stanford's Geographical Establishment, London and language and villages of a distinct architecture, condenses into the smallest possible space of time some of the most delightful sensations of travel.

Yet of late years this curiosity as to the Beyond seems to have lost something of its force as an element in mountaineering. It has become a commonplace to remark on the rarity of any taste for passes, or for wandering across country by high-level routes. It is alleged of some of the younger generation that they scramble, but cannot ramble. The pleasure of investigating by-corners of the mountains, of learning to love a strange valley, does not attract them. " We don't care for new places," murmurs some rock-climber. But he forgets that all the old places were once new to him. It is surely more prudent to lay down a cellarful of memories than a single bin !

Few districts can serve better than the Engadine for observing this change in the spirit of our Alpine holiday-makers. One may meet there climbers and tourists of average intelligence who have never seen the other side of the Bernina, or been in Val Masino. They talk of Val Malenco as if it were as remote and uncivilised as Suanetia. They lose a great deal in fine scenery and climbing, and I shall endeavour in the following pages to convince them of their loss.

" The old order changeth, yielding place to new," the poet tells us. Striking indeed are the changes that force themselves on the notice of the traveller in the Grisons. Before I start once more on a tour of the Bernina, let us, as the tombstone says, " halt and cast an eye " on the novelties added to the landscape of the Upper Engadine during the past fifty years. Promiscuous building has made havoc with the homely charms of the Lake of St. Moritz. The boulders on the shore are plastered with advertisements of—*horresco referens*—an English newspaper. A gigantic tin hand—it might be a cheap glover's sign—points to a shed called a Casino. Hard by an Italian architect has perpetrated an ignoble compound of a campanile and a pagoda. An unfinished row of booths, a little Vanity Fair among the mountains, connects barrack-like hotels, the bare spaces round which are either converted into a bad imitation of town gardens, or littered with straw and waste paper and *Einspanner*. When we come in sight of Pontresina it is hard to recognise in a long line of cosmopolitan caravanserais the once typical twin Engadine hamlets. The formerly rustic Krone has a palatial dining-room, the ceiling of which has been covered by an Italian artist with a bevy of unclad nymphs and goddesses. The top of Piz Languard has been levelled, railed round, and provided with a profusion of little benches and tables, at which hot drinks are supplied from a shed hard by.

But after a time, if the returning guest cannot reconcile himself to the changes, he finds that they are in the main superficial. The Alps are happily built on too large a scale to be easily spoilt. Man's worst—additions such as would ruin Lynton or the Lakes—may easily be overlooked on the watershed of Europe. The charming view from the Ober Alpina above Campfer across the Maloya to the twin giants of the Bregaglia has not suffered. The village street of Pontresina yet shows many vistas of wide-doored houses, quaint turret windows, and elegant iron balconies, often gay with flowers. The old bridge which gave its name to the twin hamlets still spans the torrent.[1] Even the bazaar of St. Moritz proves on a wet day to be redeemed by some fascinating curiosity shops.

If the landscape of the Engadine remains substantially the same, so too do the people. "Dicker Diebe als die Zigeuner" (stouter rogues than gypsies) a Basel professor rudely called them in the seventeenth century. But his printer had to apologise handsomely for the libel. He would be a rash man who repeated it to-day. But it may fairly be inferred that the Engadiners were never deficient in business qualities, and these they have developed as fortune favoured them.

But what of the visitors? How have they changed since the days when Gredig and his family kept half-a-dozen rooms for the strangers who came once or twice a season, and Badrut did not know the look of a circular note?

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[1] Pons Saracenus appears to have been a mediaeval scribe's version of Pontraschin (Pons Rhaetiae). The Romansch form may still be found on local maps on the meadows near the torrent.

In a village where sixty years ago the gathering together of two or three English was an event you may find 200 guests feeding as one at a single hotel. Royalty and republicanism find luxury at St. Moritz. The world and the stage congregate mostly at Maloya. At Pontresina we meet plain, conventional folk, neither famous nor notorious, who enjoy out-of-doors life according to their bent and powers, who do their Languard or their Corvatsch, their Bernina or their Crast' Aguzza, as they feel inclined. Not that the place is without a few Alpine oddities. I remember some years ago a company of mild-eyed, melancholy golfers who drove daily in an omnibus down to the flats of Samaden. This sect affected not to recognise mountains, and one of its members was authentically reported to have refused to learn the names of the Roseg summits on the ground that it was scarcely worth while, since, as he understood, the snow peaks melted every year and fresh ones came up in spring in their place. A few youths, limp and languid on week-days, proceeded to church on Sunday morning in frock coats and silk hats, lamented the rarity of dress clothes of an evening, and generally behaved as if they were inmates of a Scottish water-cure establishment.

A sign of the times at Pontresina, of the extent to which scrambling has been accepted as the essence of mountaineering, is the invention displayed in the search for decayed rock-teeth, and the importance attached to their ascent. You hear more of the Blumen and the Schwestern than of the Crast' Aguzza or Piz Badile. "The Sisters" first acquired an unhappy notoriety by luring a German climber to his death. They are three eminences on a rocky spur of the range of Piz Languard, which immediately overhangs the village and threatens it with stone avalanches. The climb undoubtedly has picturesque merits. If you are not too careful to take the easiest way you may give a neophyte the pleasure of dangling by the rope on a highly tilted rock-face, of jumping across a gap in a very narrow ridge, of climbing by cracks, imperceptible fifty yards off, a cliff of perpendicular aspect. These delights appear to move—in prospect at any rate—the hearts of many ladies, and an escort over " The Sisters " is a compliment much appreciated by the sex. When the crags are dry and free from fresh snow the ascent is quite safe for any properly roped and constituted party. But the right track is not always plain, and a fall almost anywhere may easily be fatal.

But it is time I left the Engadine and justified my title by getting " Behind the Bernina." My centrifugal force —or old-fashioned weakness—very soon drove me with François Dévouassoud over the Bernina Pass to the last chalet on the Poschiavo side of the Canciano Pass. Thence we walked across the glaciers of Piz Scalino (10,925 feet) to Chiesa. The traverse is without interest from the climbing standpoint. The views, however, on the sunny slopes and villages of the Val Tellina and across to the white cliffs of the Monte delle Disgrazia, are varied and admirable.

Two days later we stood on the top of that noble mountain. The direct ascent from Chiesa is, in the lower portion, shady and agreeable. Near the Alp Rali copious springs of ice-cold water burst out of the hillside; these are the drainage of a glacier lying high up on the flank of the Disgrazia. The hut on the Passo di Corna Rossa is in a splendid position for a sunset view. On one side the eyes range to Monte Rosa; on the other they command the bright landscape of Val Tellina.

In recent years the Italian guides have varied the ascent from the Sasso Bisolo Glacier to the top by going straight up the crags from a point some hundred feet below the saddle. This is, no doubt, the shortest climb when the rocks are free from ice. Heavy snow forced us to stick to the crest, which must always be the more beautiful way. The step-cutting can be laborious, and on a windy day might be disagreeable. The views down the precipice on to the torn glaciers on the Val Malenco side are superb, and the ridge, though not in the least dangerous in ordinary weather and with common care, is narrow enough in places to thrill persons of sensibility. The top of the Disgrazia is all a rock peak should be—a naked crag held up by converging ridges of the most savage aspect. The crest that stretches to the southern pinnacle, broken by steep teeth and laden with loose boulders, is a peculiarly splendid specimen of mountain structure. The second time I stood on the peak was the hottest day of the year, when the thermometer rose to 98 degrees in the shade at Milan. Lombardy was veiled in golden heat haze, but the green hills and vales of Como, and the whole company of the snowy Alps from the Grand Paradis to the Weisskugel, were basking in clear, shadowless light. After a month in the Engadine, of such panoramas as that from Piz Languard, where the lower peaks are grey and gaunt, and beneath the snow line the prevailing tone of the hillsides is a rusty brown, the glorious greenness of the middle zone of the Alps on the Italian side was very grateful to our eyes. Our perch seemed almost to overhang the meadows and forests of Val Tellina. Not a breath of air stirred. Yet fifty feet below us we saw a record of the fury with which at times the blasts beat on this exposed summit. The torn and bent metal roof of a hut which a daring Italian had induced the local guides to erect lay beside a formless heap of broken walls on the western rocks.

Years have not greatly altered the Baths of Masino. The solitary house in the forest under its horse-shoe of granite precipices has a curious fascination for the few Englishmen who have reached it. The beech woods, the lovely southern ferns, the bright brooks and waterfalls give a romantic charm to the stern heights that shut out equally the heat of the plains and the frosts of the Grisons. The near walks are not many, but there is a fine view of the Disgrazia to be had ten minutes from the house.

A hut has been built three hours above the Baths for the ascent of Piz Badile, one of the twin rocks that look down the whole length of the Engadine. We did not think it needful to use it. But we spent a humiliating number of hours on a climb that earlier mountaineers have done in half the time. It must be said for us that an intensely hard frost, which had frozen deep into the ground even round the Club hut, had converted all the moisture on the peak into sheets of ice. In this state of things I found the rock-climbing extremely, once or twice excessively, interesting. There were passages which were far worse than any I met with either on the Schreckhorn or Dent Blanche. There was small call, it is true, for gymnastics, for there was little to hold on to, but I never felt more strongly the constant need of the greatest caution.

The view from the summit of the Lake of Como as far as Menaggio, and again near Argegno, suddenly revealed to us as a passing mist swept off, was most beautiful. Striking too in contrast was the vista along the lakes of the Ober Engadin, and the peep of the roofs and chestnuts of Promontogno, cowering under the northern cliffs.

I had never explored Val Codera—the long valley which descends between the western spurs of the Bernina group to the Lago di Mezzola, the uppermost section of Lago di Como, cut off in modern times from the main portion by the delta of the Adda. To descend through it to the level of the lake, from the snows to the olives, promised to be a walk after my heart. The idea was encouraged and finally adopted when we found on the outer wall of the Club hut a notice that the "Via alla Stazione; Novate" was indicated by red triangles. The marks guided us most efficiently across the alp westwards past several gaps which we might easily have mistaken for the pass to a narrow grassy hogsback. The extraordinary beauty of the western view from it was beyond description. We halted, too enchanted to think of the hour, to study its details. Close at hand the wild ranges of Val Codera rose in noble curves to bold rocky summits. Italian hills, delicate in modelling and robed in soft greens or blues, according to their distance, filled the middle of the picture. High on the horizon the Pennine and Oberland snows swam clear but soft in "a golden air."

The descent began by a grass ledge. After a few yards this was suddenly closed by overhanging rocks. François, who was leading, appeared to us to plunge down a precipice. He answered our criticism by pointing to the red triangles. They indicated the only means of advance. It was requisite to go down a dozen feet of nearly vertical rock by the help of two grass tufts, and then for several yards to walk across a horizontal crack which gave foothold varying from two inches to nothing. Nominal support—help in balance—could be gained at first by digging axes into grass overhead; farther on handhold was obtainable. François walked across without a moment's hesitation, but we did not despise the rope. This " mauvais pas " would not, perhaps, trouble younger cragsmen. It came upon us unprepared and when somewhat tired. But to indicate a route including such an obstacle to unsuspecting tourists as a station path is surely rash. A practical joke that may lead to fatal results should only be resorted to under exceptional circumstances—as, for example, in the case of a hotel bore. There can be little doubt that in this instance the Milanese section entrusted their paint-pot to a conscious, if unconscientious, humorist; for we found afterwards that he had not only continued his triangles through the villages and along the high road, but finished up with one on the ticket office of the station at Novate.

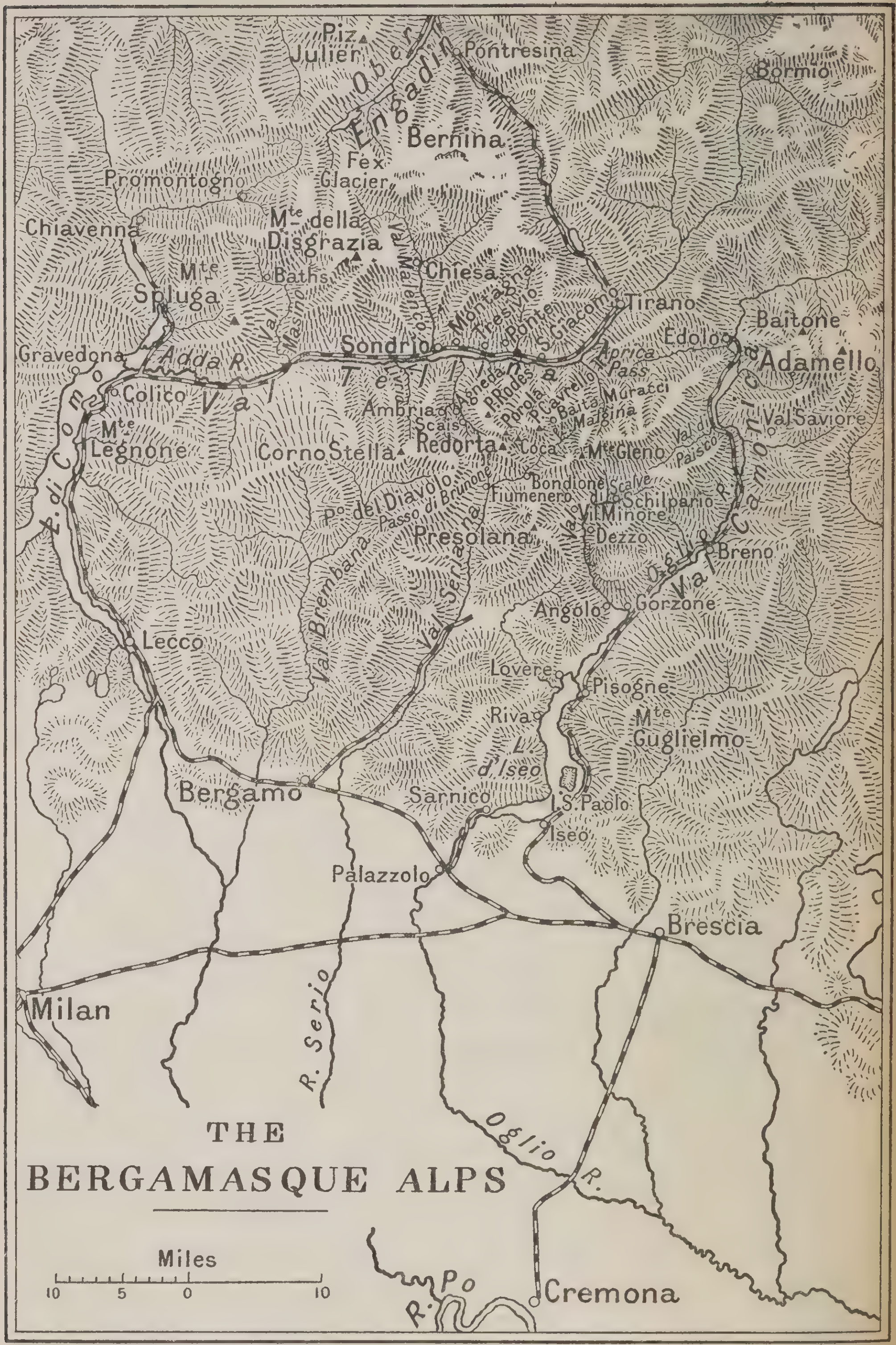
The remainder of the descent down steep rocks and loose shale to the first alp was straightforward. A zigzag path left of the stream leads into the young pine forest which entirely clothes the head of Val Codera. There is soon a picturesque view up a side valley to the left towards the fine peak of Monte Ligoncio.

Near a summer hamlet of stone huts the stream is crossed to the right bank. The middle portion of the valley is bare and the path stony. Stones are everywhere. The rainstorms that visit the mountains at the head of the Italian lakes have poured torrents down every trough in the hills, rent their sides, and spread ruin over their hollows. The landscape is consequently more interesting to the physical geographer than to the lover of the picturesque, until where the valley curves southwards stones become less prevalent, and green meadows and chestnuts refresh the eyes. The village of Codera occupies a secluded situation on a sloping hillside above the head of a deep gorge through which the torrent cuts its way to the lake. Beside the church stands an immemorial sycamore.

Our path—the only path out of the valley—proved to be one of the most singular and impressive in the Alps. It is in many places a mere groove cut in the face of a cliff, and without any parapet, above a sheer abyss. The gorge is closed in front by a green bluff crowned with cottages. In order to reach this long flights of broken stairs had to be climbed down and up again. Then the view opened on the purple slopes of Monte Legnone, still aglow with the reflection of the sunset. Over its edge the rising moon threw a pale light on the blue hills behind Gravedona. We forgot all anxiety about trains, the seventeen hours we had been afoot—everything but the vision before us, one of the most exquisite I have known among the mountains.

How interminable in the gloaming seemed the last zigzags! How deep and far the shining surface of Lago di Mezzola! The moon, sailing in the most friendly way just above the spurs of the Legnone, soon threw bright beams full on our path. At last we were among the lawns and fields and stone walls of the Vale of Chiavenna. Ten minutes more and we gained the high road and the village street of Novate. Good news met us. The first person we encountered proved to be the station-master hurrying to meet the last train to Chiavenna, due in five minutes. A long day, of some excitement, many pleasures, and no mishaps, was crowned by an excellent supper and beds in the Hotel Conradi.

I should be glad to encourage more Englishmen to go to Promontogno and Val Masino. Their fascination for me lies in the extraordinary contrast between the savage rock scenery and crevassed glaciers—the Bondasca glacier has of late years repulsed more than one party of capable climbers—and the lovely verdure close at hand. Promontogno and Soglio filled me with enthusiasm in 1864, and fifty years after I found I came back to them, as to most of my rather numerous *premiers amours*, with increased affection. The Grey Twins—Piz Cengalo and Piz Badile—we looked up to with such awe because Mr. Ball had called them inaccessible had lost nothing by being climbed; they had rather gained a personal interest. The vignettes of peak and waterfall in Val Bondasca improve by being lingered over on the off days which advancing years demand. Sitting by the Castle on the Roman Wall—Castelmur—between the pines and chestnuts, the traveller realises, as it can seldom be realised, that he is sitting at the very gate of Italy—that gate which is barred as by a flaming sword to the Limited Company of Serious Mountaineers.


Piz Julier
Ober Engadin
Pontresina
Bormio
Bernina
Fex Glacier
Promontogno
Chiavenna
Mte della Disgrazia
Chiesa
Mte Spluga
Baths
Val Masino
Val Malenco
Tirano
Baitone
Montagna
Tresivio
Ponte
S. Giacomo
Sondrio
Edolo
Adamello
Gravedona
Adda R.
Aprica Pass
Val Tellina
Colico
Ambria
Agneda
P. Rodes
Porola
P. Cavrello
Baita Muratci
Malgina
Val Saviore
Mte Legnone
Scais
Redorta
Coca
Mte Gleno
Val di Paisco
Corno Stella
L. di Como
Po del Diavolo
Passo di Brunone
Bondione
Fiumenero
Scalve
di Schilpario
Vil Minore
Val di Scalve
Presolana
Dezzo
Val Camonica
Oglio R.
Breno
Val Brembana
Val Seriana
Angolo
Gorzone
Lecco
Lovere
Pisogne
Riva
Mte Guglielmo
L. d'Iseo
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THE

BERGAMASQUE ALPS

Stanford's Geog! Estabt, London.

VIII

THE BERGAMASQUE ALPS AND LAGO D' ISEO

SONDRIO is the link between the Bernina and the Bergamasque Alps, and a centre for the exploration of the latter. I have a perhaps undue affection for the place. It is too hot for a prolonged stay at midsummer; but at any other season it offers, to my mind, great attractions for lovers of the Italian Alps. It has an excellent hotel where after a morning in the snows one can dine under a pergola of vines and oleanders. I have found in a side street a housewife cutting her potatoes on a Gothic chest.

I believe not less than seven carriageable roads converge on the little town. You can drive up into the hills in many directions—to Chiesa in Val Malenco, up Val del Livrio to the foot of the Corno Stella, up Val Masino to the Baths; perhaps best of all to the old villages high on the sunward slope of Val Tellina—Montagna, Tresivio, and Ponte. The road climbs among vineyards, winds into and out of chestnut-muffled combes, deep in whose shade bright cascades flash among the ferns or under the dark planks of an old water mill. Here a ruined castle, there a campanile with a cluster of rustic homesteads is planted in the happiest situation. In the distance the broad green levels of the valley stretch away towards the sunset, framed by the blue crest of Monte Spluga and the vaporous line of the hills behind Gravedona. Above the falling curves of the Aprica the snows of the Baitone and the Adamello catch the afterglow, as the vapours that have been resting on them melt away into an untroubled sky. No one who takes this drive on a September evening but will long to repeat it. One of the best points of view is the terrace of the great pilgrimage church near Tresivio, a vast white structure, recognisable from afar, even from the summit of the distant Adamello.

Sondrio itself is but a small country town. It has none of the historical attractions of Aosta, which in position it resembles. It cannot vie in picturesqueness or in ancient remains with that most interesting of sub-alpine towns. It cannot compete with the mountain romance of Promontogno; even Chiavenna is in some respects more picturesque. Yet I remember Sondrio with an affection I should think the result of personal accident, had I not found it shared by independent judges. The little town is Italian to the core. It forms a striking climax to a descent from the Monte della Disgrazia. After the blinding snows, the wearisome boulders, the scorching glare, the mountaineer is in a humour fully to enjoy the drive beside the torrent among the vines and chestnuts, the noble prospect over the great valley, and the final dash past the high-piled haycarts and through the fireflies and the narrow streets up to the door of Signor Vitali's hotel. And what transition can be more agreeable than that from the damp hay of a very poorly provided Club hut to a spacious Italian palazzo, where you dine at a window which opens on a cool garden, while the grapes are hanging ready to be plucked on a pergola close at hand?

Another day *cretâ notanda*—no, rather by a bottle of Augustus' favourite Rhaetian wine, the oldest Val Tellina—has been snatched from oblivion. But to-morrow soon comes, and with it the same blue unclouded weather. The alternation of rest and toil is one of the prime pleasures of travel.

The visitor to the Engadine who climbs Piz Julier enjoys one of the most varied mountain views obtainable within a day's walk of Pontresina. If he is a curious mountaineer he will hardly fail to notice, as his eye runs along the white crest of the Fex Glacier, a single distant rock-peak that cuts the sky-line. It is improbable that his guide will be able to tell him more than that it is a mountain of Val Tellina. If an Engadiner he will certainly not view with favour any suggestion of a visit to the range to which it belongs. For here, close to one of the centres of the "visitors' industry," is a district, unexplored by Englishmen, containing bold rock-peaks and not a little snow and ice, where the local industrials understand their business so badly that before the war they were thankful for eight to ten lire a day.

South of Val Tellina, from Colico to Edolo, from the Lake of Como to the Aprica Pass, stretches a lofty ridge, the first summit of which is the beautiful Monte Legnone, one of the most familiar objects in the lake landscape. From the crest steep glens fall northwards. On the south labyrinthine valleys, upland basins, chestnut-muffled ravines, separated by grassy ridges and steep limestone crests, stretch away towards Bergamo. These are the Prealpi, or Forealps, of the Italians, known also as the Orobian or Bergamasque Alps.

Only one frequented track crosses them—the Passo di San Marco. In the Middle Ages this, as its name suggests, was a favourite route for the merchandise of Venice, by which it evaded Milan and the Spaniards, who held a castle near Colico. Travellers occasionally used the Aprica Pass, at the eastern limit of the group, leading from Tirano to Edolo. Thus Lassels, a travelling tutor, who wrote a *Voyage of Italy* in 1670, found it convenient, he tells us, to cross "the Berlin and the Vrig"—he meant the Bernina and Aprica—and so to "pop up at Brescia."

The central group lies just south of Sondrio, about the head of Val Seriana. A few miles farther west is the peak seen from Piz Julier—the Pizzo del Diavolo—a rugged crag, called, with little reason, the Matterhorn of the district; and beyond it, accessible from Val Brembana, is the Corno Stella, famous for its view and now provided with a path, a hut, and an engraved panorama. The main glaciers of the group lie about the Monte della Redorta and the northern slopes of the Pizzo di Cavrello and the Monte Gleno.

From Val Tellina the chief peaks are masked by the great bastion crowned by the Pizzo di Rodes. It is only opposite the opening of Val Malgina that any insight into the glacier scenery of the Prealpi is obtained.

My purpose was to walk up Val di Ambria, and thence climb on the following day the Pizzo della Redorta, once reckoned the loftiest of the Bergamasque Alps. It was the hottest hour of the afternoon when we left the town in a cart which took us to the foot of the hill. The valley opens as a deep cleft on the Val Tellina; the path winds steeply among the chestnut slopes. It was warm—so warm that our local man, whose family were in summer quarters at Agneda, the upland hamlet where we proposed to sleep, was glad to load the provisions and sacks on a donkey, which, pleased at the prospect of exchanging a stable for mountain freedom and pasture, stepped out gaily before us.

We stepped less gaily so long as we were exposed to the full rays of the afternoon sun. But our reward was not long in coming. The slope of meadow and chestnut wood climbed, the path turned into the welcome shade and comparative coolness of the long gorge through which the torrent of Val di Ambria descends to the Adda. The landscape was striking—bold mountain forms, slopes clad in verdure, hollows green with ferns, here and there aged beeches, relics of an ancient forest. Slowly the track and the torrent came together. The scenery grew sterner before, at the first group of huts and water mills, the glen split. The right-hand track leads to its only permanently inhabited village, Ambria, and steep Gemmi-like passes to Val Brembana. We turned to the left, and by a zigzag gained a brow on which stands the hamlet of Agneda, a

> Poor little place, where its one priest comes
> On its festa day, if he comes at all.

At any rate, he has a house and a chapel to serve there, and his house being locked up we were glad to sleep in his barn. The chapel was locked up also, and so we missed seeing a picture said to be of some merit. Our local guide undertook to provide accommodation for meals in the rude cottage where his family passed the summer. Once upon a time the plain of Agneda was occupied, doubtless, by a charming lake. For many years its basin has been choked by fluvial deposits, and a stony foreground spoils the landscape.

In the dim dawn we crossed the stones and climbed the next step in the valley, a rocky barrier with pines and waterfalls, to the secluded meadows of Scais (4800 feet), where the glen again divides.

Another steep ascent, which commands glorious views of the Disgrazia, leads to the last alp. Above this the glen is mostly stones, and the scenery is extremely savage. We ought to have gone up to the glaciers at its head, but our local guide led us to a broken-down path which climbed very steeply amongst avalanche débris to our right.

This was the track to the Passo della Scala, so called from a rock-built staircase up to the lowest gap in the chain, constructed for the use of the charcoal carriers, who transported fuel to the iron foundries of Val Seriana. The traffic has ceased, and the stairs having fallen to ruin chance wayfarers find a slightly higher passage to the east, where the crest can be gained by climbing a long, dull, snowy trough. On the broken crags near its head *Viola Comollia*, a rare species with a very pretty bright mauve blossom, was growing profusely. It is only found on the Prealpi.

From the Passo di Brunone we had to traverse under the southern side of the crest without gaining much height for at least a mile. Thus we reached the *névé* of a considerable glacier—considerable for these parts—and, climbing the last slopes, found ourselves in the gap we ought to have reached by the chief glacier of Val di Agneda. The few crevasses at its head may possibly be at times formidable; in 1894 they were passable without difficulty. The nature of the ground hereabouts is misrepresented in the Italian map; the saddle is a snow col unbroken by rocks. The final ridge of the Redorta can be run up by mountaineers of any experience, though a novice, by choosing badly, might effect a slip on the snow banks. As I sighted the stone man I came in view also of a herd of chamois, enjoying themselves on the summit. They had doubtless been driven by the exceptional heat of the last few days to the breeziest station.

We were lucky in our day. To the west the distant panorama was obscured by thin haze, but in other directions the atmosphere was pure, and the view varied and delightful.

At our feet we could see the windings of the Serio through its green spacious valley. Beyond the dolomite cliffs of the Presolana we looked across to the waters of Lago d' Iseo, flowing round the base of its bold island hill, and under the gentle ridges of Monte Guglielmo, a charming Italian down, the Montarone of Brescia. The Adda was visible not only in Val Tellina; a sinuous streak of light across the plain marked its lower course below Lecco.

Our neighbour heights held their own well. Opposite was the bold pyramid of the Pizzo di Coca, close at hand rose the precipitous crags of the Punta di Scais and the Pizzo di Forola. To the west, at the other end of a long basin, stood the Pizzo del Diavolo.

We descended with many glissades the south-west glacier of the Redorta, and then turned and traversed to the right to a grassy brow where a party of labourers employed in erecting a Club hut were taking their siesta. Below this we came on the zigzags of the disused Passo della Scala. A fine crop of stones covered them. The ruin of a path is, perhaps, the worst possible walking. We descended past a pretty waterfall to the junction of the streams in the long basin lying parallel to the chain which forms the head of Val Fiumenero.

The approach to the village of that name in Val Seriana lies through an extremely picturesque glen. Steep crags, wood, meadow, and water unite to form ever varied and always romantic landscapes. The cool vaulted rooms of the village inn of Fiumenero gave welcome refreshment, and a country cart helped us up the few miles to Bondione, a grubby mining hamlet. A quarter of a mile above the village a homely but clean inn has been opened, in a pleasant situation. Here I touch on the old ground of my "Italian Alps." I would only repeat my conviction that in June the falls of the Serio must be well worth the drive from Bergamo. In August they want water, but their total height is stupendous —no less than 3000 feet. It takes nearly two hours from Bondione to reach the level of the top of the cascade, where, in a gap in the ridge which protects the large pasture basin —once a lake—of the Barbellino Alp, a Club hut has been erected. We met a large Italian party descending, who had apparently been enjoying a few days' fresh air without hotel bills. This is a development of the use of tourist-huts which in more frequented regions has become a serious abuse!

After crossing the stream and passing the huts of the higher Barbellino Alp we climbed the steep hill above it, and after a long, trackless ascent found ourselves on a level with the little Lago della Malgina. Turning more sharply to the left, over a wilderness of loose stones and broken crags we climbed to an upper basin filled by a glacier. Here we were joined by a solitary figure we had for some time had in view. It proved to be a lad of sixteen out for a holiday from Bergamo, who had bicycled up the valley, and was lodging with the shepherds of the Barbellino Alp and enjoying mountain exercise. Snowy banks and shale slopes, gemmed with the most brilliant gentians and violas, led up to the crest.

The descent lay down a long snowy trough, excellent for glissades. When the snow ends the huts of the Baita Muracci appear on a brow to the right. They command a singular and a very attractive prospect. The mountain opposite consists of rock ridges and terraces, separating a series of small ice-filled bays, from which streams fall in glittering cascades over the lower cliffs. A zigzag track leads down among flowers, woods, and copses to the bottom of the valley. The torrent crossed, a good path is found on the left or shady bank. The descent is constant, but neither steep nor stony. The stream is robbed of most of its water for irrigation channels before it reaches its last plunge into the Val Tellina. The path winds under the shade of a noble chestnut forest, among the greenest lawns, plashing rivulets, and scattered broad-roofed farms, until the last bank sinks into the vines and Indian corn of the greater valley. Half a mile of country lane led us across this to the bridge over the Adda, opposite the inn of S. Giacomo, the half-way post station between Sondrio and Tirano.

One more corner of the Bergamasque Alps remained still unknown to me, and through it accordingly I planned a new way to the beautiful lake which for travellers from the south is the centre and forms the natural starting-point to this region.

A few miles below Edolo, the chief town of Val Camonica, a steep narrow glen, Val di Paisco, leads up to a low pass which gives access to an upland basin at the head of Val di Scalve, the easternmost of the Bergamasque valleys. Ancient chestnut woods, white villages perched among meadows and millet fields on the sunward slopes, higher up crags and pastures, such are the ordinary features of a side valley in the Lombard Alps. Val di Paisco differs from the type in one respect : as its head is approached the hillsides are stained by grubby huts and rubbish heaps, the scars left by iron mines. The descent into Val di Scalve has quiet charms of foreground, but on the morning of our visit the sun took holiday and mists veiled the higher hills. The upper alps were fringed with thick copses of laburnums ; lower down the path led through a pine forest which covers the whole floor of the valley. Schilpario, the chief village, has almost the air of a town, although 3700 feet above the sea.

Its *Albergo Alpino* is a *pension*, much frequented in summer by fugitives from the heat of the cities of the plain. When, after drying my wet clothes at the log fire which had been hospitably lighted for us, I descended to the Sala di Pranzo I found my companion surrounded by a bevy of Brescian ladies who might have come out of a *Santa Conversazione* by Moretto or Romanino. The subject of the present conversation was profane dancing. The night before, it appeared, the company had paced an English measure. Should they call it Sir Royger, or Sir Rowger, or Sir Rogé ? When this mystery had been fully discussed we enjoyed an excellent meal. But we fled before nightfall. It was doubtless ungallant, but we felt that if called upon to lead the national dance we might betray our incapacity. Let some younger Alpine Clubman who can be content to spend a week in romantic uplands and to attempt moderate climbs try Schilpario. The Re di Castello and Monte Gleno, the dolomitic cliffs of the Presolana, may furnish some good scrambles. There is a fine walk across the mountains by upland villages to Breno in Val Camonica, and a pleasant stroll over fields painted blue and white with forget-me-nots and daisies to the second village of the valley, Vil Minore, planted on a breezy shelf under the great cliffs of the Presolana.

But the most attractive of all the walks or drives in the neighbourhood is that down the gorge through which its stream escapes. It is one of the most remarkable in the Italian Alps and well deserves its local title, the Via Mala Bergamasca. Dezzo, the lowest hamlet of the upper valley, is picturesquely placed astride the river that gives it its name, but on closer approach is found to be defaced by the grime of mining industry. Below the last houses the river is tightly grasped between two walls of rock. A narrow groove cut in the cliffs at a great height above the water enables the road to accompany it into the narrow cleft, until beyond a rock-buttress pierced by a tunnel the cliffs become less sheer and the road drops to the stream-side. The rest of the gorge—and there are six miles of it—is less savage but not less romantic than its entrance. Between spines of precipitous crag, draped with laburnums, and walls of dense copsewood, the torrent fights out a difficult and devious passage. Fountains burst out everywhere from the porous crags, some dripping gently through the fern-leaves, others falling in fresh showers across the road and making what Lassels would have called "many unavoidable wetting-places."[1]

As the mountain sides sink in front, the Dezzo again burrows in a ravine into which a pretty waterfall leaps from the opposite bank. The ground on both sides of the stream rises gently in cultivated banks, diversified with walnuts and fruit trees, and broken here and there by grassy bastions or platforms, frequently covered by some chapel or church, whose whitewashed walls and pillared portico are shaded by noble chestnuts. Two large villages lie among the meadows.

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[1] Lassels "travelled five times through Italy as tutor to several of the English nobility and gentry" about 1650, and his book, *The Voyage of Italy*, was printed after his death at Paris in 1670. In his time the four most frequented routes across the Alps were: (1) the Mont Cenis; (2) the Simplon, of which and the "perpetuall valley of the Valesians" there is an amusing description; (3) the Julier, Bernina, and Aprica Passes, by which you "pop up at Brescia"; some, however, "to avoid the snow of Berlino (the Bernina) are forced now and then to passe over the mountain Splug, which is hill enough for any traveller"; (4) the Brenner and Val Sugana to Treviso.

The road passes through Angolo (whence a direct and most attractive footpath leads over the right-hand hill to Lovere) and then descends to cross the river at the upper end of the final wooded cleft by which it pierces the massive buttresses which block the mouth of Val di Scalve. At Gorzone, a village on a brow, an imposing Gothic wall-tomb is passed by the wayside. A steep short descent through vineyards, with a noble prospect over Val Camonica, leads to the banks of the Oglio, and a few miles more, along a shady country road, to the lake and Lovere.

Lovere is one of the most picturesque of the smaller lake-towns. The houses along the quay are, many of them, several centuries old, with broad eaves and open loggias supported on Gothic columns and arches. Frescoes of the sixteenth century linger here and there on their walls. From a little platform projecting into the water the peak of the Adamello appears to the left of the snowy crest above Val Saviore. The greater part of the town is built up a hillside, so steep that the first-floor windows of each house look over the roof of that next below it. Many of the streets are mere staircases, over or beside which swift mill-streams rush down into the lake. There are two large churches ; the one east of the town is architecturally interesting, with a nave of noble proportions adorned with monolithic columns.

The charms of Lovere and Lago d' Iseo were long ago (1747) described by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. The first sentence of one of her letters—" I am now in a place the most beautifully romantic I ever saw in my life "—has been frequently cited as an early example of appreciation of mountain scenery. Elsewhere she speaks of " this extraordinary spot of earth, which is almost unknown to the rest of the world, and indeed does not seem destined by Nature to be inhabited by human creatures, and I believe would never have been so without the cruel civil war between the Guelphs and Ghébelines." What would she have thought of the Engadine? Lady Montagu is at some pains to describe accurately the town and neighbourhood.

"I found a very good lodging, a great deal of good company, and a village in many respects resembling Tunbridge Wells not only in the quality of the waters which is the same, but in the manner of the buildings; most of the houses being separate at little distances, and all built on the sides of hills, which indeed are far different from those of Tunbridge, being six times as high; they are really vast rocks of different figures, covered with green moss or short grass diversified by tufts of trees, little woods, and here and there vineyards, but no other cultivation except gardens like those on Richmond Hill. The whole lake, which is twenty-five miles long and three broad, is all surrounded by these impassable mountains, the sides of which, towards the bottom, are so thick set with villages (and in most of them gentlemen's seats) that I do not believe there is anywhere above a mile distance one from another, which adds very much to the beauty of the prospect.

"If it was a regular range of building, it (Lovere) would appear magnificent; but being founded accidentally by those who sought a refuge from the violences of those bloody times, it is a mixture of shops and palaces which ascend a mile high in a confusion which is not disagreeable."

The latter extract shows amusingly the struggle between an individual liking for the picturesque which finds "a confusion not disagreeable" and deference to the orthodox taste of the day, to which regularity was an essential. That Lady Montagu really enjoyed the scenery, however, her descriptions are good evidence; and if we are at first startled by her references to Tunbridge Wells and Richmond Hill, we may remember that the wooded slopes of the Caucasus have been compared to Clieveden. It is not, however, for any one who has ever used the epithet "park-like" of natural forests to throw the first stone at this class of comparisons.

Socially Lovere has strangely fallen back since Lady Montagu bought for £100 a handsome villa, and was welcomed by the inhabitants as a decoy likely "to attract all the travelling English." In the first half of the eighteenth century it was at once the Bellagio and St. Moritz of the day. Our countrywoman has left us a lively description of the company and their "assemblies (which they call conversations); the gentlemen being all in light nightcaps and nightgowns (under which I am informed they wear no breeches), and slippers; and the ladies in their stays and smock-sleeves tied with ribands, and a single lute-string petticoat. There is not a hat or hoop to be seen." The patients and the "miraculous man," who was their oracle, have all long gone beyond reach of water cure; and with them these assemblies, "the opera three times a week, the diversions on the water, where all the town assembles every night, and never without music," have become shadowy memories. Even the iron spring itself shares in the general oblivion.

Despite the fair start for fame it had thus early made Lago d' Iseo has for the last hundred and fifty years been neglected in favour of its more western rivals. Not one in a thousand of the cosmopolitan crowd who haunt Como and Maggiore has swum on its waters. Experts in scenery differ widely as to its charm compared to the other lakes: Ball ranks it below Lugano, Hare boldly proclaims it "in many respects the most beautiful of all." Comparisons, when so much depends on accidents of light and shade, of season, time, and weather, are perhaps better avoided.

The usual access to the Lake from Brescia is by Iseo. But this misses its lowest reach, which, though relatively tame, furnishes a pleasing introduction to the bolder scenery of the central portion. The traveller coming from Bergamo does well to take the little line from Palazzolo to Sarnico, a town at the spot where the Oglio issues from its resting-place. If he climbs to the Villa Montecchio on a brow above the quay he will be amply rewarded. The view from its terrace is a dramatic surprise. In one direction the noble expanse of the Lombard plain, islanded with towns and towers, among which the distant campanile of Cremona may be distinguished, spreads to the foot of the fringing Apennines. In another the bright sheet of Lago d' Iseo, embosomed in shapely hills, for the first time reveals itself.

But the peculiar charm of the spot is due neither to plain nor lake but to the living stream which links them. In front of the white quay of Sarnico the escaping flood narrows itself into a river for a few hundred yards of glossy smoothness. Suddenly, the bright water grows conscious of its new power and dashes off in a swift boiling race. Lost sight of for a moment beneath the vineyards of the hill on which the spectator stands, it appears again gliding swiftly into the plain through which the eye traces for miles its silver reaches.

Above Iseo, a typical Italian lake-town, the Alpine portion of the lake begins. Mountains, green and forested on the eastern side, face the steeper and rockier slopes opposite them. Numerous villages, the glowing oleanders on whose quays throw pink reflections on the waters, give variety to the shores, and pilgrimage chapels crown the lesser heights. There are none of the palatial hotels and gay villas and gardens that give parts of Como the air of being decked out for a perpetual festival. But if these exotic charms are wanting their absence is to some tastes more than made up for by the perfect harmony between the natural features of the landscape and the decorations due to human agencies. A distinctive object constantly in the foreground is an island some miles in circumference which rises to a crest several hundred feet above the surface of the Lake. Its gentle slopes are covered with olive gardens interspersed with white-walled hamlets. The monastery of S. Paolo, fixed amongst the waters on an isolated rock which its buildings, modest as they are, entirely cover, looks, contrasted with the neighbouring island-mountain, like a buoy beside a huge man-of-war.

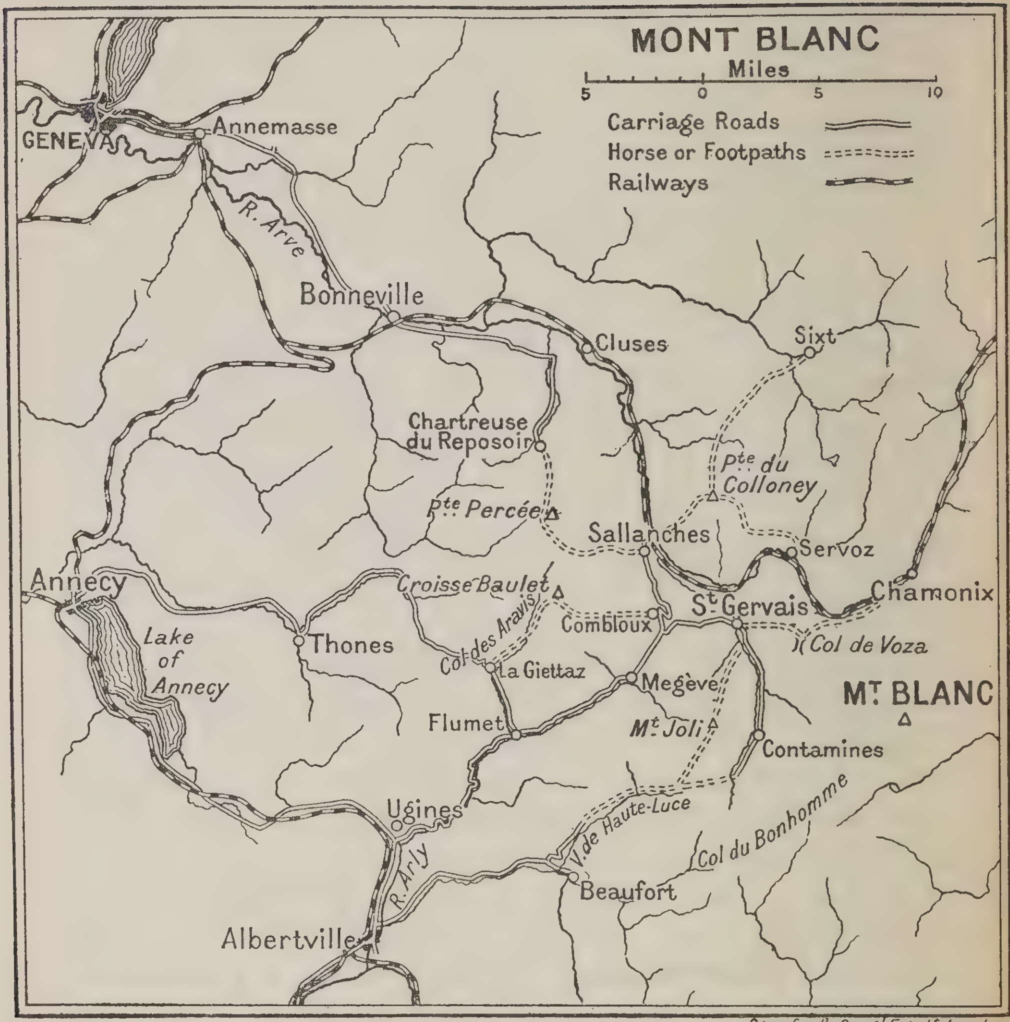
The precipices which now rise on either side, pierced at their base on the eastern shore by the tunnels of the high road and railway to Val Camonica, recall Lago di Lecco. But the steamer soon passes beyond them to the upper and most beautiful reach of all. As it advances into the bay of Riva, a hamlet in a bower of olive woods, sheltered by sloping meadows and chestnut groves, the mountains of Val di Scalve and the rugged Presolana withdraw behind the green intervening downs. At the same time the nearer promontories retire and the head of the lake comes into view. Two towns, Lovere and Pisogne, lie along the shore on either hand in front of hills cased in velvet turf and mantled with luxuriant forests. Beyond them opens a wide deep valley, enclosed between lofty mountain summits. Suddenly, high above all else, rises a blunt pyramid, white with perpetual snows ; it is followed by a long icy crest, from which the glaciers plunge valleywards. The lake view which comes nearest in scenic arrangement and effect to this sudden revelation of the Adamello is that of Mont Vélan from near Vevey. In both cases much of the beauty is due to the frame through which the snows appear. The nearer mountains on either side of Val Camonica tumble towards each other in huge brown and purple masses of noble outline. Two or three dusky mounds, piled up in the middle of the valley, break the monotony of its lines ; all the "heavenly opening" is filled with the deeply coloured air of Italy. Doubtless the finest hour for the view is that at which I first saw it, when the low sun shining through gaps in the western hills chequered the lake and gilded the distant snows. But seen in whatever light, the head of Lago d' Iseo deserves to be ranked among the choicest spots in this beautiful region.

IX

BY-CORNERS IN SAVOY, WITH SEVERAL NEW WAYS TO MONT BLANC

Most of my readers must at some time or other have watched, as I did the other day, a party of rustic pleasure-seekers in a picture gallery. My country critics seemed never quite happy until they were close enough to stick their umbrellas into the canvas which had the misfortune to be the object of their momentary curiosity. Their proceedings interested me, for they suggested a train of reflection. "Substitute," I said to myself, "alpenstock or ice-axe for umbrella, Mont Blanc for Titian, and here is a very exact parallel to the conduct of most modern tourists towards the monarch of mountains." "In the season of 1883," boasts Chamonix, "fifty-four ascensions have been made to Mont Blanc." How many of the "ascensionists," I should like to know, saw Mont Blanc as well as climbed it? We have all heard of the American ship-captain who reached Rome in the morning, drove straight to St. Peter's Piazza, went to the top of the dome, and returned by the first train after lunch to his vessel at Civita Vecchia. He had, he reckoned, seen all there is to be seen in Rome straight off. That man was a typical specimen of the genus, the alpine variety of which we are now considering.

Chamonix is so placed with respect to Mont Blanc that the summit loses half its effect, and few strangers can even make out which is the real top; the valley is monotonous and unpicturesque in form, and has little variety in vegetation; the true beauty and grandeur lie not under, but either on, or a little way off, the great mountain. But what


MONT BLANC
Miles
5
0
5
10
Carriage Roads
Horse or Footpaths
Railways
GENEVA
Annemasse
R. Arve
Bonneville
Cluses
Sixt
Chartreuse du Reposoir
Pte. du Colloney
Pte. Percée
Sallanches
Servoz
Chamonix
Annecy
Croisse Baulet
St. Gervais
Combloux
Col de Voza
Lake of Annecy
Thones
Col des Aravis
La Giettaz
Megève
MT. BLANC
Flumet
Mt. Joli
Contamines
Ugines
V. de Haute-Luce
Col du Bonhomme
R. Arly
Beaufort
Albertville

Stanford's Geog! Estab! London.

does the tourist care ? Beauty has had no place in his life, and why should he trouble himself about it all of a sudden ? Is not his holiday humour amply satisfied with novelty, excitement, and good dinners, and cannot he find all these in the crevasses of the Mer de Glace, the Mauvais Pas, and the tables d'hôte of the Chamonix hotels ?

Close contact with mountains has its advantages ; and I, at any rate, shall be the last to depreciate them. But it ought to come as a supplement to, not as the substitute for, those distant and general views which best display the whole structure, proportions, and meaning of Nature's architecture. This to me sounds a platitude ; to many travellers and some climbers it may, judging them by their practice, rather seem a paradox.

It was not held so in our fathers' days. In their time — for us elders in our own — Sallanches and St. Martin were names kept in affectionate remembrance. To the past generations "Did you see the view from St. Martin ?" was as interesting a question as "Have you done Mont Blanc ?" has become to their successors. Turn over the pages of any of the old albums full of the hand-coloured plates for which Ruskin spared a well-deserved word of appreciation. Amongst the blue skies—now too often black and faded, but once pure and smooth as the illuminations of an old Missal—you will hardly fail to come on a "View of Mont Blanc from Sallanches." Every traveller slept beside the Arve at the country inn of St. Martin, and wandered out on to the high-arched bridge the diligences used to rattle over, towards sunset to watch the last rose colour fade off the broad slopes of the Dôme, again in the morning to wonder at the marble-like purity of the snows, seen themselves in shadow through a transparent veil of early sunshine. The level lines of the plain, now in great part reclaimed from the Arve, add to the effect of the mountain. This plain was meant by Nature to be a lake. Unfortunately the numerous torrents which pour down into it, particularly those which flow from the friable slates (even the roadfarer may notice that the little stream from Combloux brings down in its course of four miles more rubbish than the Bonnant in its course of twenty), have filled the basin with "the sand, gravel, and pebbles" which, as De Saussure tells us, now compose its soil. Yet even a hundred years ago a sudden flood could cover its surface, and De Saussure describes the town of Sallanches, seen on the edge of the waters, which reflected its "tall and glittering spires," as offering a "picture of the greatest beauty."

What do the visitors of to-day see of this once celebrated landscape? As much as may be visible out of the windows of their railway cars, or under the cover of their charabancs. Much-doing, more-done tourists, how we pitied you as, lying reclined *in remoto gramine* in the clear, fragrant air of our upland lawn, or under the laden apple boughs of our valley home, we saw far below, rolling along among the poplars of the plain, the cloud which veiled your strange pilgrims' progress!

The contrast between the old and this new style, between De Saussure or Shelley on their mules, or even Albert Smith in his country cart, and these van-loads, is depressing. Yet possibly our ancestors get more credit for taste than they deserve. Had the early tourists appreciated the Vale of Sallanches they would surely have done something more than stare from the bridge; they would have gone on to explore the neighbourhood. The view of Mont Blanc from the town is obviously imperfect. The effect of the crest of the mountain seen over the Dôme is in no way that of a crowning pyramid, but rather, if the irreverence of the comparison may be excused, that of a button on the top of a Scotch cap. In the glory of the whole chain we may easily forgive this failing, but it is difficult quite to forget it. Now any one who is at home among mountains must know that from a slightly higher standpoint this defect would be less conspicuous; and behind the church tower, the pedestal of the noble spire which perished in the conflagration of 1840, rise slopes in themselves charming enough to tempt to a ramble. It was, I believe, the break in the road rather than the beauty of the scenery which delayed our ancestors. The highway in their days went no farther than Sallanches.

Longer ago than any one would have believed possible before the publication of Bonnefoy's invaluable collection of the historical documents relating to the Priory of Chamonix the upper valley was made accessible to wheels. In 1458 a Prior bargained with the priest of Servoz for the construction of a road, "bonum, condecens et sufficiens," wide enough for his wine carts, through the gorge of Les Montets. It was to have parapets and passing-places, and to be of such an incline that two horses might draw up it what would be a load for one on the level. But when in the eighteenth century we first hear of the track above St. Martin it is as a mule path. In 1775, we are told, a rough car-road was made, in order to accommodate the visitors to the glaciers, even then numerous enough to support three hotels at Chamonix and rising to 1500 in the year. But it was not until 1869 that the upper valley was brought within an easy day's drive of Geneva.

Napoleon III. was the prime author of the decay of St. Martin. When, after the war of 1859, he tempted Savoy to desert her old princes, he had some reason to fear lest the high country might vote for union with republican Switzerland rather than with imperial France. Cheap lucifers and a "free zone"—that is, exemption from import duties—were baits dangled successfully before the eyes of the mountain dalesmen, a race shrewd rather than sentimental. New roads were added to the bribe. When Chamonix opened wide its gates to receive an empress and a coach and four the old halts on the road became no longer necessary. St. Martin, Chèdde, and Servoz lost their vogue.

But the causes here brought forward affect only the ordinary traveller. The mountaineer ought to be independent of the world of wheels. Unfortunately there is a certain cockneyism even among climbers. The "cockney climber" has been defined for us by Sir Martin Conway in the *Alpine Journal*, as "one who cares nothing for secondary peaks." Now it must be allowed that to that despised class —if not to a lower—the summits round Sallanches belong. The limestone crest which girdles the granites of Mont Blanc on the north-west has in truth few of the requisites for modern popularity. In the Eastern Alps the tourist, being bidden thereto by his red book, may allow himself to gaze curiously at the bold bastions or the fantastic sky-line of peaks no loftier than the Aiguille de Varens; but in Savoy he has come to see glaciers, and nothing short of a glacier will he look at. Besides, while these peaks are not difficult enough to attract the neck-or-nothing cragsman they are yet a good deal too steep and rugged for the everyday traveller. One summit, however, is known to some of either class. A few adventurous tourists climb, and not a few climbers condescend to stroll up, the Buet. But they carry their explorations no farther. Yet the Buet view, like the St. Martin view, has its failing, conspicuous in every photograph. No plain intervenes between the spectator and the great granite pinnacles; no receding valley leads his eyes up to the mighty dome; no flashing torrent illuminates the broken gorges. The range of the Aiguilles Rouges runs across the foreground, and cuts off with its saw-edge all the foundations of Mont Blanc. The view has breadth and height, but no depth. Yet most of its visitors fail to notice that the mountain is but one point in a chain which offers a large choice of accessible Belvederes.

Before we proceed on our search for this perfect view it may be well to note the broad geological features of the district. The forces which raised the granite of Mont Blanc from its subterranean bed tilted up on its northern flank a parallel limestone ridge stretching from the Rhône valley at St. Maurice to the Lake of Annecy. It is broken by the gorge of the Arve, and at the Col des Aravis. The space between the granite and the limestone is filled by soft shales and slates forming downs of rounded outline, whose broad tops, covered with wood and pasture, and coloured in autumn with crimson frost-touched bilberries and purple heather, resemble Scotch hills and form an effective contrast to the rigid crags on either side. Only in the Buet do these shales lift themselves to the dignity of a mountain summit. The view of Mont Blanc we are in search of can obviously only be had from some point in the limestone screen or on the lesser heights between it and the granite; for, once behind the screen, we must go so far before we can again see the snows that they will have become distant objects, beautiful indeed, but no longer sublime.

The portion of the range which presents its southern face on the traveller's left as he mounts from Sallanches to Servoz may be roughly described as a steep bank from the top of which, but standing back so as to leave room for a level terrace at its base, rises a turreted wall. The loftiest tower is the Pointe de Colloney (8833 feet), of which the better known Aiguille de Varens (8087 feet) is the corner bastion. The breaches in the wall are few, and the tracks up its face therefore are either, as the Col du Dérochoir, rough scrambles, or, as the Échelles de Platé and the sledge track which attacks the shoulder of the Aiguille de Varens, the result of skill in finding the weak point in precipices which from many points of view look vertical, and of labour in building staircases practicable for mountain cattle.

At the foot of these precipices and along their whole length, falling from E. to W., from the Col d'Anterne toward Sallanches, stretches a broad terrace, in its upper portion alp, then woodland, lastly fields and orchards. The views it commands are some of the noblest in the neighbourhood of Mont Blanc; yet its primitive peace is unbroken by any visitors except the native herds. The foreign ants keep to their white track in the valley 1500 to 3000 feet below.

The walk up to this terrace is charming, whatever the starting-point. There is ample choice of paths—the walnut-shadowed lanes behind Passy, the vineyard alleys near Chèdde, or the grass-grown forest tracks which wander through the woods towards Servoz. Seldom in the High Alps—nowhere perhaps so close to the glaciers, for Mont Blanc is much nearer at hand than Monte Rosa at Ponte Grande—do we meet with so much variety and beauty of foreground. Moss-grown farmhouses with wide balconies are overshadowed by spreading walnuts; vines climb high among the tree-tops, or grow in vineyards which yield in October the most delicious clusters of Muscat grapes. Country lanes, with all the quiet charm of Somerset, wander amongst heavily laden orchards, open hay meadows, copses of oak, or high beech woods. When we look beyond the landscape seems arranged to show off its crowning glory. The dark, densely wooded cone of the Tête Noire[1] and the blunter brow of the Prarion throw up the snowy flanks of the Aiguille du Goûter. On either side the smooth, poplar-sprinkled meadows of the Vale of Montjoie and the steeper, pine-clad gorge which holds the shining reaches of the Arve lead the eyes up by natural corridors to the ice-fields of Mont Blanc.

Each upward step is rewarded by the addition to the view of some fresh peak. Now it is the Aiguille de Bionassey coated in mail of glistening sérac, now the Dôme du Miage looking down on the spire of St. Gervais, or the blunt crags of the Aiguille du Midi contrasting with the white flood of the Bossons Glacier. No wonder that the "historian of Mont Blanc," the enthusiastic Bourrit, chose a spot on these slopes, a boulder beside the now vanished Lac de Chèdde, for his burial-place, though I confess to a doubt of the entire truth of his assertion that he discovered the site while running *after* a wolf. If the nominative and accusative were transposed the story would be more credible to those students who have made friends with Bourrit through his books.

On the angle at the western extremity of this terrace, and above St. Martin, a native of Passy has built himself a stately summer house. Behind this empty and generally deserted pavilion lies a meadow, framed on three sides by beech woods and on the fourth overhanging—literally overhanging, for the rock has been hollowed by weather—a long slope clothed in oak woods. The Aiguille de Varens shoots up overhead ; Mont Blanc towers serenely opposite.

One uphill track leads towards the Aiguille, a second to the meadow shelves above the cascade of the Nant d'Arpenaz. We take a lane which follows the terrace under the limestone cliffs in the direction of Servoz. Meadows and copses extend as far as the stream, which, springing full grown from the base of the precipices of Platé, acquires in its last leap name and fame as the Cascade de Chèdde.

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[1] Not to be confused with the well-known defile of that name on the other side of Chamonix.

Thence the cart-track zigzags uphill through the beech woods to a broad meadow about the size of Lord's Cricket Ground and level enough to pitch wickets on. A low bank divides it from a smaller platform. Both are encircled by pine and beech woods. The limestone cirque, with its bold cliffs and buttresses, gives a shelter on the north; the fantastic crags of the Chaîne des Fiz lean over one corner. Straight in front the snows rise in a majestic sweep from the Corridor to the Calotte.

A broad level gives force even to the undulations of lowlands; woods have their own romance; here both seem to meet to glorify Mont Blanc. The turf, in spring a mass of blossom, is starred even in late autumn by a few gentians and a crowd of pale crocuses. At the latter season the woods and the atmosphere give the colour. I despair of making any one realise in imagination half the glory of the foliage as I saw it in early October. Among the mass of beeches two tones were prevalent, a pale saffron and the deepest red gold. Here and there a single tree or a clump of alders retained their summer green. The birches fell in yellow showers clear and soft as laburnum blossom. The pines formed a steadfast background of dark green, varied here and there by turning larches.

Above this meadow rough sledge-tracks lead through woods and glades which open from time to time into broad hay fields. The largest of these meadows is known as La Plaine Joux. Passy, as its vineyards prove, the sunniest spot in the neighbourhood, was inhabited in classical times, and two Roman inscriptions are preserved in the churchyard. There is at any rate nothing impossible in the supposition drawn by local antiquarians from the name that the Romans here established an altar to Jupiter Penninus, who towers opposite in his proudest pomp.

From this alp, the seat of a chalet establishment, those who keep to paths will either run down corkscrew tracks to Servoz or, bearing still upwards, gain the mule road which leads from that village to the Col d'Anterne and so to Sixt or Chamonix. In the former case they should take a boy from the chalet to guide them through the labyrinth of faint tracks that leads to a treasure hidden from the common eye in the secrecy of the forest. They will suddenly come on a spot where an ancient landslide has formed a shallow lakelet, long ago ringed round by fallen stems, ferns, and mosses. Red stumps of broken pines are still visible under the clear blue waters, which reflect, framed as in a mirror over the encircling tree-tops, the silver crest of Mont Blanc —and nothing else. The wanderer finds himself, as it were, alone with the White Mountain, in a world shut off from all intrusion of human sights or sounds.

From Plaine Joux tramps who do not mind a scramble and wish to see something of the strange Désert de Platé before returning to St. Gervais had better make for the Col du Dérochoir, a hunter's pass in the ridge west of the Chaîne des Fiz. The climb from a distance looks uninviting, but is in truth singularly interesting. It leads over the scene of one of the greatest catastrophes in the Alps.

In August 1751 news reached the Court at Turin that a volcano had burst forth near Sallanches, and that flames and showers of ashes were issuing from it. The king despatched Donati, a savant whose merits have been rewarded by his name being attached to a comet, to see what was really the matter. After travelling four days and two nights without halt Donati found himself in presence of the phenomena. The mountain was enveloped in clouds, great blocks fell from time to time with a noise exceeding that of the loudest battery, and all the neighbouring country was covered with a fine ash-like deposit. Every peasant was ready to swear he had seen flames, but none was bold enough to approach the spot whence they were supposed to issue.

Donati penetrated into the clouds and to the edge of the chasm. There he saw that a mountain-side was falling into ruin, and that the smoke was nothing else than the dust raised by the boulders in their downward rush. He ascertained to his own satisfaction the cause of the disaster. The rock which had fallen proved to be a hard marble. This marble when in situ had lain between an uppermost layer of slate and a lower layer of the same soft material.

The upper slates and the marble had allowed the passage of water through cracks at right angles to their cleavage. A very snowy season had so saturated the ground above that the water, penetrating through the cracks in the marble, inundated the lower layer of slate and caused it to give way, thus precipitating the whole mass towards the Arve.

Similar accidents have happened in other places, as on Ararat in 1840, when the peasants fancied that they saw flames, and a legend of a volcanic outburst was started; and in 1877 in the commune of Ste. Foi, near the Little St. Bernard, when the dust clouds were visible from the Col du Géant, twenty-five miles off, and the fall lasted during three months.

What the traveller now sees are huge mounds of débris marking where the main bulk of the fall rested. More curious is a section of the cliff which started intact, but soon halted without breaking up in its downward course, and now overhangs threateningly a steep slope. Had it not been for the half-way terrace the valley of Servoz would have fared badly; as it was the damage done must have been chiefly in the curtailment of pasturage.

The lowest point in the present line of cliffs is inaccessible; but a few yards to the west, where the small end of a fan-shaped bank of débris rests against the rocks, there is no difficulty in climbing their face. No difficulty, that is, in fine weather; for by missing the way, or when ice has glazed the cliff, a fatal slip is possible, as was proved some years ago in the case of a workman crossing alone from Servoz to Sixt. The poor man lost his footing on the rocks, and his body was found months afterwards at their base. It is probably this accident which has led to the Dérochoir being stigmatised in Joanne's *Guide Book* as "passage devenu excessivement dangereux." From the ridge the view to the north is uninteresting. Little is seen beyond the trough-like glen of Les Salles, with its meadow shelves and stables, where in place of cows a troop of young horses spend the summer.

To return to the valley of the Arve we may cross the northern slopes to the Col de la Portetta. Part of the way lies through an autumn flower garden, the rest over the skirts of the " Désert," of which more anon.

A short downhill run brings us to the Chalets de Platé, which lie in an oasis near the edge of the limestone waste. We are now on the verge of precipices. The beginning of the corkscrew track which threads them has to be hit off. For the first 200 feet it is hewn out of cliff faces. Below advantage has been taken of an exceedingly steep gully in which it coils itself. Among the highest beech copses a glorious fountain bursts forth, a plunge into which may wash off the dust of the arid cliffs. In ten minutes more we regain the beautiful meadow and have at our choice half-a-dozen paths, any one of which will bring us down again to the bank of the Arve.

I had long planned and put off a walk to Sixt over one of the peaks at the south-west angle of the Varens range. At last, one glorious frosty October morning, alone and laden only with food enough to ward off starvation, I ran down 4000 feet from our chalet into the Vale of Sallanches, passed through the damp fog of the river banks, and then upwards among the reddening vineyards and leaf-strewn meadows of Passy. After two hours of steady tramp I had regained the lost height, and sat down on the steps of a small hay chalet to look across the valley at the home I had started from.

I was about half-way up a long steep meadow which lies on the very angle of the chain, cut off both above and below by cliffs. The lower tier is easily pierced by a sledge path. To reach higher ground it is needful to mount into the corner under the Aiguille de Varens, where an unexpected and curiously constructed cattle track leads through the rocks to the higher level of the huts of La Barme and past them to Platé. Where under the Aiguille the track descends to La Barme I left it to adventure on the Désert.

Wherever any large mass of uplifted limestone is exposed to the action of the air one of these wastes is sure to be found ; but they are not so common in the Alps as to be familiar to travellers, and paths naturally avoid them. Perhaps they owe some of their singular horror—for they are singularly horrible—to the contrast between their smooth appearance at a distance and the labyrinthine pitfalls they expose on nearer approach. The stock comparison to a glacier of stone is not a bad one. Here, as on a glacier, there are huge bosses, deep narrow clefts, of which no eye can reach the bottom, a blindingly white surface. But the sense of desolation is greater even than on the ice-fields. The glacier has something orderly and organic in its nature: it is surrounded and protected by its parent peaks; the sound of living waters pervades it: the limestone desert lies bare and borderless to the sky; no noise except the clang of the steel-pointed ice-axe or the grind of the nailed heel on the harsh, arid surface breaks its hideous silence. Lay hold of the rock, and its sharp edges cut through the coarsest glove. Such might be the scenery of the moon or of any exhausted, lifeless planet over which the vault of heaven shines only in mockery.

Avoiding the broader chasms by keeping close to the cliffs of the Aiguille de Varens and its sister pinnacle, where fallen boulders choked their depths, I reached the foot of the low steep cliffs of a nameless summit, the spur from which separated the hollow I was in from the larger basin of Platé on the east. I climbed the crest—a short sharp scramble—in the expectation (for which the French map gave sufficient ground) that I should be able to walk from it along a broad ridge to the Pointe de Colloney.

But the connecting link was not at all what I had hoped for. The crest was narrow, and its smooth, sloping surfaces were coated with snow, half frozen and then refrozen into ice. Rocks in this condition are at all times my abhorrence, and I would as soon have tried to fly as trusted myself alone upon these. Moreover, the ridge was broken at the base of the Colloney by a little cliff of some thirty or forty feet, which might possibly have stopped me at the last.[1] This cliff ran all round the side of the mountain in view. It was, in fact, the remnant of an horizontal layer or stratum which had perished elsewhere under atmospheric action. It is not pleasant to abandon an ascent which has been accomplished by French engineers, and their cairn fronted me very conspicuously. I must, however, either make an enormous circuit, or get down at once into the head of the Platé basin. The latter course at first sight seemed difficult ; but a more careful survey showed that the snow, though it lay at a high angle and was too much broken by rocks for a safe glissade, could be used to tread steps in, and that after some 300 feet of descent level tracks could be made under the eastern face of the Colloney to its farther ridge. Unluckily, after I had got well under the mountain I was tempted by a buttress. Its easy chimneys brought me in front of glazed faces and overhanging icicle-dripping knobs it would have been folly for a solitary man to meddle with. I thought of Mr. Clarence King's famous feat on an ice-stalk. But prudence mastered emulation ; so down I had to come again, not without some loss of temper as well as time, for the day was passing, and I seemed likely to be balked by a peak which I knew, the right way once found, to be perfectly easy.

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[1] This ridge will probably be found "perfectly practicable and easy" by the next comers, who are a "party" and meet with no ice. In the Alps "conditions" are everything, and the same place is never the same, a truism which human vanity is slow to accept, for it is apt to interfere sadly with one of the principal pleasures of late-born climbers—that of boasting themselves in Homeric phrase to be—what they doubtless are—"far better than their fathers."

I had hardly advanced a hundred yards beyond the buttress when the key of the fortress was in my hands. Loose and easy rocks led up to a notch in the north-eastern ridge of the peak. On gaining this notch the northern flank came into sight. I had nothing to do but to follow in the footsteps of two chamois who had recently made the ascent across snow-banks broken in one place by steeper rocks.[1] I regained the crest a few yards from the top, and walked along it to the cairn.

The summit of the Pointe de Colloney consists of a flat steep-sided mass of limestone, and may be compared to the highest step of a pyramid, unpretentious from a distance, but puzzling to climb save where weather has broken down its verticality. One guide-book — the first that described the ascent of the mountain—called the top ridge "narrow." It may be so from one point of view: that is, it is not much wider than an average London builder's staircase. But except to those who wish to proceed along it arm-in-arm (as the author of the remark very probably did, for it is in this attitude that many tourists reach their peaks) the appropriateness of the adjective will not be conspicuous.

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[1] Chamois, I may remark, generally, unless when pursued, take the easiest course. Deliberately to go up a mountain the wrong way was reserved for the human intelligence.

I was on the top by one o'clock, and, as I had started at six and gone over 10,000 feet of ups and downs, there had not been so much time wasted. I could still spare a long hour for the view, and yet hope to see Sixt before nightfall.

That hour was perfect. There were clouds in the sky, but none touched even the highest earth. Only upon the brow of Mont Blanc the spirits of the air wound and unwound transparent rainbow-tinted scarves of vapour, visible for a moment and then again lost in the purple of noon. In the north a pillar-like cumulus stood over the summit of the Voirons. As I watched it two horizontal bars opened out, at one moment resembling the arms of a gigantic cross, at another the wings of some monstrous bird.

Across the upper sky the cloud processions moved peacefully with no audible sound of wind. The herds had already deserted the high pastures, and the face of the earth, but for some muffled sounds of falling waters, was noiseless about my "solitary hill." No living creature was visible in the vast horizon. I was alone with Mont Blanc. To the feelings suggested by such a scene, Shelley has given expression in his famous "Lines to Mont Blanc," and it is well to leave them in the poet's hands. But let us remember, while we do so, that there were mountain lovers before the last century, that Rousseau and his successors were not the first to express in adequate language, much less to create, the feeling for mountains we often call "modern." Conrad Gesner, the Zürich physician and naturalist of the sixteenth century, when he wrote, "Hic in profundo et religioso quodam silentio ex praealtis montium jugis ipsam fere caelestium, si quae est, orbium harmoniam exaudiri tibi videberis," came very near to Shelley's—

> Deep music of the rolling world.

It was to the naturalists of the Zürich school that the renewal of the primitive friendship between men and mountains was in the first place due.

To come back from the harmony of the spheres to matter of fact. From the Colloney the shape of the summit of Mont Blanc is singularly graceful, and its aiguilles present themselves effectively. But, on the whole, I must give the preference to the view from the Pointe Percée. The only Swiss mountain remarkable was the Weisshorn, very finely seen through a gap in the nearer ranges. The characteristic of these Savoyard views is the solitary predominance of Mont Blanc. The horizon shows no cluster of rival peaks as at Zermatt, no long array of snows as at Turin. The Dauphiné peaks are too distant for scenic effect, and even the beautiful and ill-named Mont Pourri, the Gross Glockner of the Western Alps, is completely dwarfed by the snows of the Monarch, as he stands up far above and in advance of the receding lines of his kindred.

The foundations of the Colloney itself are, after Mont Blanc, the most notable feature in the view. Even as seen from above, the great buttresses which fall away towards the Arve show as superb specimens of mountain architecture. The eye plunges down a precipice to rest on two swelling lawns, the caps of bold bluffs which in their turn fall in cliffs to the meadows beside the river. Beyond and opposite, the Pointe Percée lifts its bastions from the abyss with similar abruptness, its crest showing from this point as a sharp and shapely wedge.

It would be possible to descend into the snowy hollow on the north of the Colloney, and so return to Sallanches by the lawns above the Cascade d'Arpénaz.

I retraced my footsteps to the foot of the peak, and then followed for some distance the continuation of its north-eastern ridge. The ground I had to traverse was terribly broken, a very labyrinth of rough white bosses and hollows, split up in every direction by hideous chasms. The surface was fretted by air and rain into sharp edges which cut like knives. Not a flower or a blade of grass clothed its nakedness. Scrambling up and down, in and out, impatiently, yet with some caution—for what would be the fate of the solitary man who lamed himself or broke a limb on such a spot? —I found myself before long in the very heart of the wilderness.

I had reached the unused and nameless pass (shall it be called the Col de Platé?) which is afforded by the lowest point in the ridge which divides the ground sloping towards Platé, from the broad glen trending in the direction of Magland, through which lies the track mentioned in guide-books to the Lac de Flaine.

In the centre of the gap, hemmed in by cracked and broken tiers of white rock lay two bowl-shaped pits or caldrons, grim amphitheatres, looking even in broad daylight fit scenes for the meeting-place of ghostly visitants. At this point I turned my back on Mont Blanc, and descending slightly, made my way, as best I could, towards the grassy ridge abutting on the Tête Pelouse, which separates the waters feeding the Lac de Flaine from the basin of the Sixt river—the Giffre. I thought myself fortunate in finding something like a track which, though often, and at last irretrievably lost, carried me on fairly at a level across the comparatively smooth skirts of the Désert.

In two hours from the Pointe de Colloney I had reached the pass under the Tête Pelouse, and was looking on the Lac de Gers. I ran quickly down the steep grass to the huts beside the water, where I was hospitably invited to wait for the milking by some epicene persons in divided skirts.

In the charming evening hours I strolled down beside the waterfalls through the thick damp mossy woods and over the steep hay meadows to the valley, entering the level corn-fields of Sixt as the peasants were leaving off their field labours, and reaching the familiar and still (1921) unspoilt convent-inn as the last sunbeam faded from the rocks of the Pointe de Tanneverge.

Enough has been written about the mountains east of the Arve. No mountain-lover ought to feel a moment's doubt as to the first walk to be taken on the farther side of the river. The Pointe Percée du Reposoir[1] is never out of sight from the valley. From below Sallanches it shows as a slender pinnacle, between the town and Servoz as a broad blunt wedge; from St. Gervais it roughly resembles a sphinx or lion couchant. The good people of Sallanches feel some sort of pride in it as their tutelary peak, and the young townsman who now and then makes the ascent appears generally to miss his way, and always to run into great peril. Strange to say, no English traveller has, so far as I know, succeeded in gaining this, the ideal view-point for Mont Blanc.

It was at the end of the dry weather of July-August 1881 that I made the ascent with François Dévouassoud. The heat was so great that the idea of a walk in the cool and a night on an alp was agreeable, and it was towards evening accordingly when we set out from Sallanches to stroll up to the Chalet du Cœur.

Behind the church a steep path leads among the hills. They are covered with fields, meadows, and orchards, amongst which little brooks run half hidden in deep dells of underwood. The wayside cottages are comfortable, with whitewashed walls, broad eaves, and wide balconies, gay with pots full of carnations and oleanders, through which their inmates may look out on Mont Blanc opposite. At the upper limit of the fields the path turns into the narrow glen of the Sallanches. A second ascent leads to pastures high above the stream, and sheltered by a semicircle of cliffs, down the centre of which falls a slender but picturesque cascade. In a charming situation surrounded by scattered sycamores, here the highest trees, a native of Sallanches has built a substantial pleasure chalet, in which he, his family, and several guests were now residing.

From this spot we watched the sunset. It was one of the last evenings of a long and unprecedented drought. The air was full of vapour, and the great mountain glowed with quivering hues like a live coal. Long after all the aiguilles had turned pale the topmost crest kept the colour lingering about its snows.

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[1] The mountain has also been referred to in books as the Pointe des Fours and the Mont Fleuri. I prefer the name used by De Saussure, and since adopted in the French maps. Percée comes from a natural window in its crags, du Reposoir from the Chartreuse in the valley on its N. flank. De Saussure describes the peak thus: "Une cime calcaire d'une très grande hauteur et absolument inaccessible; c'est un feuillet mince, qui s'élève comme une crête par-dessus une tête de rocher très élevée" (*Voyages*, § 284).

We were hospitably accommodated in a barn. At sunrise we resumed the ascent. A zigzag path constructed with great ingenuity led us through the fine tier of cliffs near the waterfall, and landed us on the secluded shelf—a considerable pasturage—above them. Here we took a track to our right, skirting the edge of a hollow where I fear the mountain side will some day break down in ruin. When the track ceased to ascend we left it, and climbed straight up steep grass until we reached the ridge which dominates Sallanches at the point where it abuts against the south-western angle of the Pointe Percée.

A projecting buttress of the peak shut out our view of what lay beyond, and we had to descend some 150 feet on the northern slope of the grass ridge in order to turn it. On its farther side we found a wild boulder-strewn recess, beyond which again rose a far-projecting spur of rock. To go round this spur would have cost much time and a long descent. It was, however, easy to climb the rocks in the centre of the recess, bearing near their top along a ledge to our left which brought us to the crest of the before-mentioned spur. We now looked for the first time across the Reposoir side of the mountain. We were already half-way up the peak. There was no difficulty in following ledges which led into a broad hollow in the northern face, narrowing at its head into a funnel which pierced the highest rocks of the mountain. We found the ascent of this gully perfectly simple, and were soon on the highest ridge, a very fine edge, the "feuillet mince" of De Saussure. A few yards farther was the stone man (9029 feet), which we gained at a cost of five hours' actual *walking* from the town, a slight improvement on the eleven hours of the guide-book.

There was no mist in the sky to mar, no cloud to add variety to, the view. But the long heat and drought showed their influence in the qualified blue of the sky overhead, and in the strange haze, half golden, half amethystine, which played on the horizon, seeming to rise and fall like a transparent curtain, now over one, now over another of the peaks that fringed it.

The view of Mont Blanc was as perfect as I had hoped. Not only was the mountain shown in its full proportions, but with every adjunct that could add to its impressiveness. The plain of Sallanches lay at our feet; the ravine of the Arve led the eye up to the very base of the Glacier des Bossons, and thence to the crown of the mountain. The rolling downs above Megève gave variety to the view. For the rest, Mont Pourri displayed its singular and elegant pyramid, the Dauphiné peaks were conspicuous on the horizon, and the green glen of the Reposoir was pleasant and restful to look down upon. In a later summer I visited its Chartreuse, still almost as out-of-the-world a spot as in the days when its inmates took De Saussure and his companions for a band of brigands.

Our peak itself proved as thin as it could well be to stand the weather, and the precipices on all sides were respectable, and gave the sense of isolation which is one of the charms of the higher mountain tops. We passed some hours on the summit, and several more at the chalet on the descent, where its owners entertained us with French wine and politics.

There is one more excursion on this side of the valley, which can hardly be too strongly recommended. The greater part of it might be made on mules. The Croisse Baulet (7336 feet) is one of the highest brows of the smooth slate hills which lie under the limestone. It is a bold grassy crest accessible from any quarter. From Sallanches the pleasantest and most obvious route lies through the hamlet of Cordon and along the flat-topped spur of the Croix de Plan which forms the southern boundary of the Combe du Cœur. I climbed it on a frosty October morning from the opposite quarter, from the inn at La Giettaz, at the foot of the Col des Aravis. I had an uphill race with autumn mists, but I won it, having made 3316 feet in one hour and fifteen minutes. When I reached the top the vapours were still boiling and surging far below Crowded in masses only a few hundred feet above the Arve, they gave to its basin an appearance of immeasurable depth, and consequently overpowering height to the stainless bulk of Mont Blanc, now coated in fresh snow as far down as the Bonhomme and Col de Voza. From time to time an arm of vapour surged up and embraced the mountain. Then the giant shook himself free and burst forth again incredibly high in the sky against the pure upper vault.

The next stage in my walk lay along the crest dividing the head waters of the Arve and the Arondine. The ground was covered with bilberry bushes turned a bright red by the night's frost. Here and there in moist hollows shone a cluster of deep blue gentians, witnesses to the stimulating power of the day's sunshine. Far away on the right the peaks of Dauphiné were seen over a rolling expanse of hill and dale, mists, russet beech woods, and pale limestone pyramids.

Descending into the hollow crossed by the path of the Col Jaillet I found a level track, still keeping along the crest. The snows shone out at intervals between the pine avenues. These spread over pleasant downs until the ground broke away suddenly in front towards Megève, and a wooded ridge sloped to the left directly on Combloux. This brow is marked by a stone cross planted by the pious Megèvans. Nature has marked it more conspicuously by an outcrop of white rock. It forms the eastern horn of a crescent-shaped ridge, the opposite end of which, known as the Croix de Christomet, is easily reached from Megève, and is mentioned locally as a view-point. It must miss the glimpse down into the Sallanches basin and the gorge of the Arve. But it would be a very easy and delightful walk to mount from Megève or La Giettaz to the Croix, and then follow the grassy forested ridge to our present standpoint.

Of the walk down to Combloux I am tempted for two reasons to say nothing. Its beauty was beyond all words, and everything combined to show it to me in perfection. I must fail to describe what I saw; others may see something different and not so wonderful. The hillside must always be beautiful, but in sultry midsummer it may be less exquisite than on this October morning, when the atmosphere swam with only half-dissolved vapour, the foliage shone with red and gold, and fresh snow came down to join the rich browns of the frost-touched pastures, where two months before hard brown rocks had met the greenest of hillsides.

When I have no companion I am given to what guides call fast walking ; but on this occasion my difficulty was to move on at all. After an hour's turmoil the mists had completely dispersed. Mont Blanc seemed to grow more magnificent every moment, and on his right the Aiguilles Verte and du Chardonnet formed an independent mass of noble and picturesque outline. The snows were framed by the most charming succession of lawns and glades, brown huts and clustered beeches. Every few paces produced some new arrangement of the landscape, and each in turn was so beautiful that to tear oneself from it seemed a waste of one of the rare opportunities of life. At last (in what I am sure if I put it on record would be the slowest time ever known) I found myself among the jewel-like orchard trees and close to the glittering spire of Combloux, and on the great high road from " Thonon to Grenoble."

To this road, as a new way to Mont Blanc, I should like, in conclusion, to draw the notice of travellers. It forms part of one of the most direct and the most beautiful routes from England to Chamonix. Yet it is hardly known even in the Alpine Club. From Albertville, a railway station in the valley of the Isère, or from Annecy, roads start which meet at Ugine, at the entrance of the mountain valley known as the Combe de Savoie. From either starting-point it is a day's drive to St. Gervais or Sallanches. I select Albertville. The town changed its name some years ago in compliment to its late sovereign, Charles Albert. Previously it had been known as Conflans, for under its walls the Isère receives the clear waters of the Arly, a tributary stream formed by the union of the springs which keep green the labyrinthine glens that pierce in every direction the softer rocks that lie between the granites of Mont Blanc and the parallel limestone ridges of Savoy.

Those who can spare a day should drive up one of the most picturesque of these dales to St. Maxime de Beaufort. The town lies in a secluded meadow basin completely shut off from the outer world. Its narrow streets tell of the time when no wheels came near its walls, and on market days the peasants may still be seen in the Savoyard long coats and red waistcoats in which, according to authentic pictures, De Saussure's guides climbed Mont Blanc.

Henri Quatre, during his wars in this region, spent some days in the castle which has given to the town its distinctive name of Beaufort. The following curious note in the hand of the curé of the time may be read in the local archives preserved at the Mairie:[1] "Ce jour, dix octobre 1600, le Roi Henri de Bourbon, de France et de Navarre, a été ici en grande compagnie de princes et autres gens d'armerie. Le jour 11 il est allé au Cormet; il faisait mauvais temps. Le jour 12 il est parti, conduisant 8000 personnes, ayant fait force des siennes et grandissimes folies."

The drive to Beaufort from Albertville is through a deep and picturesque defile, a Savoyard Val Mastalone, combining with Swiss pastoral features something of Italian grace and variety, and adding to these as its peculiar charm mossy greenness and red-tiled farmhouses. It may serve as a byway to Mont Blanc, since through the glens which meet at Beaufort there is easy access on foot or mule-back to the Bonhomme track or Contamines.

To return to the high road. The valley of the Arly, or Combe de Savoie, belongs to that family of alpine valleys in which the river and its tributary streams flow in deeply cut channels, and the villages lie on broad gentle slopes high above the water. Such a valley is good to live in, for its high hamlets catch even the low winter sun, but bad to move about in, since, until human industry has pierced a path beside the river through the central gorge, the trench of every side valley is a barrier to intercourse. In the autumn of 1881 the new road was opened as far as Flumet, and a few years later the last piece of country lane gave place to a macadamised highway.

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[1] I owe this entry to Mons. C. Durier's excellent work on Mont Blanc. In the "Collection des Documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France, Lettres de Henri IV," vol. v., will be found two very characteristic notes dated at Beaufort from the King to the Marquise de Verneuil, in which he complains of the badness of the roads and of the snowstorm to which he has been exposed for three hours on the Col du Cormet. The snow put an end to his plans for cutting off the Duke of Savoy by these passes. According to the table of "letters not printed" in vol. v. of this work, Henri IV. dated a letter from "Chamouny," a slip of the transcriber or printer for Chamoux in the Isère valley, where he had his camp, as other letters of the same date show.

Above Ugine the Arly flows for many miles through a winding cleft between broken and well-wooded crags, which often approach so close that a shelf or a tunnel has had to be blasted out of their base. The road never leaves the level of the torrent, and consequently has not the romance of the Via Mala, where you pass suspended at mid-height above the abyss. But the defile is very pretty, and the traveller's eyes will hardly be wearied of watching its shifts and turns before the time comes for him to climb out of it, and a rich basin of meadows and beech woods opens in front. Flumet, perched high on a knoll above the meeting of two glens, dominates the new landscape. The mean village street, made meaner by recent demolitions, is unattractive. But when we walk out on the balcony at the back of the inn the charm of the place is discovered. The town overhangs the deep bed of the Arly, here spanned by a new bridge—a little too new, but singularly bold in its lightness and breadth of arch. Above it there shows against the sky an unexpected apparition, the long white ridge that falls from the Calotte of Mont Blanc to the Aiguille du Goûter.

Above Flumet the valley of the Arly is broad and open. The spurs of Mont Joli, the greenness of which on this side justifies, from a cowherd's point of view, its name (and cowherds named most alpine mountains), hide all but the snowy crests of the Mont Blanc chain, and when these are obscured the scenery may recall some of the tamer parts of Tyrol. Megève itself, standing on an open watershed (between the Arly and Arve) 4000 feet above the sea, closely resembles a village of the Pusterthal. The resemblance is carried further by the extreme conservatism and devoutness of its inhabitants, which expose them to the jeers of their radical neighbours, the "petite bourgeoisie" of Sallanches.

They boast a Calvary which imitates, at a long distance, the Sacro Monte of Varallo, and every alp is crowned with a granite cross. They also preserve a stone which St. François de Sales is said to have used in mounting his mule, when on his missionary tour to Chamonix. The little town is a centre of local commerce as well as of devotion. Its cattle fairs attract large crowds, and in former days the Chamoniards came to them over the Forclaz, a fact which has its interest perhaps as showing how the Romans came to put a landmark on this now deserted Col. The idea that the natural access to a valley is the gorge by which its water escapes is, as I have had occasion to say elsewhere, a very modern one. A mile beyond Megève the branch road, passable for four-wheeled vehicles, leading to St. Gervais branches off to the right, while the "route nationale" makes for the spire of Combloux and Sallanches. I cannot recommend one in preference to the other; both roads *must* be taken. After many experiences I retain my first impression that the views seen on the drive from Sallanches up to Combloux and down to St. Gervais are unrivalled in their union of softness and sublimity on any alpine highway. Where else is there to be found such a delightful variety of foreground; scattered walnuts, beech groves, smooth lawns studded with fruit-trees, brown and white cottages, mossy rocks and pines and tumbling streams? In Val d' Aosta and about Ponte Grande there may be single views more concentrated in their loveliness, but there is nothing to compare to the sustained sublimity of Mont Blanc during the long ascent to Combloux.[1] Beyond Combloux the complete view of the chain is exchanged for a series of fascinating glimpses, now of one, now of another of its pinnacles. The Aiguille Verte frames itself in the dark gap of the Forclaz; the snows of the Dôme are set like a great white cloud against the blue heaven, or the keen knife-edge of the Aiguille de Bionassey springs up suddenly among the beech tops. Presently the road leaves the upland meadow for the welcome shadow of a noble pine forest, through which it descends upon the walnut-sprinkled lawns and broad-roofed homesteads of the Val Montjoie. Immediately opposite the white hotels of St. Gervais, a modern bridge, a single arch of great height and span, leaps the ravine of the Bonnant close to the old Pont du Diable, and five minutes above the church.

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[1] The last zigzags lead through a belt of granite boulders, the high-water mark of the old glacier of Mont Blanc, many of which have been recently split up for road-making purposes. They lie some 2000 feet above the present level of the Sallanches basin.

Here I must release my readers, though not for lack of matter. Round and above St. Gervais are many other "by-corners": moss-grown mills and cottages hidden deep in the dell beside the water, Olympian dwellings set high above the autumn mists on the last skirts of the pine forest between the rhododendrons and the gentian pastures. But of these "sedes discretae piorum" it is perhaps hardly expedient to speak more particularly. And space would fail me to carry on my "ways to Mont Blanc" by a comparison between the accommodation and amenities of still loftier lodgings—the three shelters on its Savoyard face. Others may dilate on the crowded stuffiness of the Grands Mulets; on the relative delights of a night spent on bare boards at the Aiguille du Goûter, or on an ice-floor at the Aiguille du Midi. I will only confess, in conclusion, that in three out of my six attempts on Mont Blanc I have been foiled by weather.

So that, easy as the great mountain may be in itself, the young mountaineer will find that the charms of discomfort and uncertainty are not wholly wanting to an expedition hardly to be matched in fine weather for the variety and splendour of its ice scenery. And on Mont Blanc even failures leave something to look back upon. I would not willingly have missed, for instance, the sunrise I saw in 1881 from the Aiguille du Goûter. A south-westerly gale—the herald of three days' rain—had risen suddenly in the night. When morning broke, it was hardly possible to stand outside the hut among the eddying snow-wreaths. Half sheltered in the doorway we watched the ghastly pallor of the upper snows as dawn spread over them, and the mad whirl of the lurid mists which, dashing from time to time a streamer up into our faces, raced past and round the cliffs of the Aiguille below us, thrown up against the black background of the western lowlands, over which the double shadow of night and Mont Blanc still reigned. Assuredly there are more things in the heaven and earth of the High Alps than are dreamt of in the philosophy of those who repeat with more complacency than understanding Ruskin's paradox that all of strength and beauty the mountains have to reveal to us may be known by the cripple, the greybeard, and the infant !

X

BYWAYS IN JAPAN

THE traveller who dreams of extending his rambles to Japan is apt to be met by the discouraging statement, " Japan has been spoilt." My principal object in these notes of a few weeks spent in the country in the year before the war is to contradict that assertion. Japan is only spoilt for those who have not the energy to go and look for it outside the European quarters of the great seaports. Travel up-country and you will soon escape from European influences and disfigurements. You will find that the lakes and mountains, the towns and villages, the temples and hill-shrines, the rustic inns and baths, have lost none of their native character and fascination I shall say nothing here of the more obvious sights, Nikko, Nara, Kioto, Miyajima. They need no advertisement beyond that of the Guide-books. My aim is to indicate to sightseers who love landscape and enjoy exercise such moderate extensions of their rambles as may lead them into the very heart of the real Japan.

Miyanoshita, where I invite my reader to join me, can, perhaps, hardly be held within my scope as here defined. For it boasts an excellent " European " hotel, situated in a terraced garden, and frequented by summer visitors from Yokohama and elsewhere. This mountain village lies high in the centre of the Hakone hills, a group standing apart, separated by a broad level from Fujiyama, and washed at their eastern base by the waves of the Pacific. Their tops reach about 4500 feet, but the valleys are high and the scenery recalls at times that of the Cumberland Lakes. Here too are bright streams, picturesque woods, copses rich in ferns, and green heights. But the soft grey, or yellow-green, of the dwarf bamboo, which so often takes the place of grass, gives the upper slopes a tone of their own, often reproduced in native pictures of Japanese scenery.

My excuse for making Miyanoshita my starting-point is that I wish to recommend the twelve-mile walk through the hills to Hakone and strongly to urge that it should be extended by climbing up the steep path to the Ten Provinces Pass, and then following the ridge to the west towards the gap crossed by the old paved Tōkaidō road and so regaining Hakone. By making this circuit the rambler escapes from the confined horizon of the basin of Lake Hakone, and gains a view of the most entrancing beauty ; his eyes range over miles of indented coast-land and shining ocean, rocky promontories, scattered islets, green valleys, gleaming rivers, and distant ranges all steeped in the translucent atmospheric colour characteristic of Japan. In my case the gain did not stop here. The delay brought us, after sailing up Lake Hakone, to the strange " solfatara " the Japanese call " Big Hell " just after sunset, and we lingered long to admire the effect of its fumes coloured red by the afterglow, and spreading like a thin veil in front of the mother-of-pearl sky and luminous blue ranges of the west, an effect as weird as any produced in the national art. We lingered so long that we had to run to get over the precipitous part of the hillside before darkness made the narrow path leading home difficult.

Another pleasant excursion from Miyanoshita is to cross the stream, and, passing a tea-house, climb the exceedingly steep bamboo-coated hillside opposite the village, bearing to the right until the ridge is reached just east of an eminence (Myōjō-ga-take). A scarcely traceable track leads for a mile or two along a very narrow grassy hog's-back to the higher top known as Dai or " The Terrace." The traveller has before him all the way magnificent views of Fujiyama, and a wide prospect over the country and coast in the direction of Kodzu. A direct descent may be made either into the Miyanoshita glen higher up, or, to the north, to the low country and an interesting temple.

The most charming approach to Fujiyama is that from

Kōfu by Lake Shōji. Kōfu itself is an almost untouched specimen of a Japanese up-country town, with a castle-hill, broad streets, gay with shop-signs and flags, cheerful inhabitants who delight in processions and dances and make delicious sweetmeats, picturesque local industries, and one or more excellent native hotels. Situated on a fertile upland plain, it is surrounded by fine rocky mountains and looks over the nearer ridges to see the sunset reflected on the snowy head of Fuji.

A country lane first traverses for five miles a cultivated plain full of farms and hamlets and roadside stores, then crosses a broad river and mounts to a village beyond which wheels cannot go. A beaten path climbs into a recess of the hills. From the first pass it sweeps round on a high terrace commanding views of the rocky summits behind Kōfu, a climber's paradise that has been explored by that ardent mountaineer to whom Japanese travellers owe so much, Mr. Weston. Then it plunges into a delightful glen where a dozen farms, with their scanty terraced fields, cluster about a mountain stream. The landscape reminded me of a bit of Tyrol, warmed with the colour of Japanese life and atmosphere. The remote little hamlet boasted a school, a post-office, and a simple store.

The climb to a second pass lay at first through the narrowing glen and a forest of old firs, lit up by streaks and patches of vivid autumn foliage, growing on the steepest of hillsides. The Japanese are singularly expert in constructing corkscrew zigzags practicable for horses despite the acclivity. On gaining the grassy ridge the bright expanse of Lake Shōji, immediately at the traveller's feet, forms the foreground, while behind it the great pyramid of Fujiyama soars into the sky. From this point of view a considerable hill at its base forms an effective footstool to the mountain. A short run (Lake Shōji is 3160 feet above the sea) leads down through the huts of a poor fishing village to the shore, where a boat will be found ready to ferry the party across to the solitary hotel on the opposite bank. The wonderful view, framed in the fir trees of its terrace, has been reproduced in many photographs. Next morning, by rowing or sailing down the three western lakes of Fuji, and walking over the old lava-bed and little pass that severally separate them, one can make half the circuit of the mountain, reach Kami Yoshida, and, taking a private car on the tram, gain Gotemba and even Yokohama, or Tokyo, the same night.

Of the Nikko walks I need add nothing to the Guide-books. I may, however, suggest that it is quite worth while, in place of taking the train thence to the next mountain resort, Ikao, to hire the hotel motor and drive the seventy miles. For the first ten the way lies along the great cryptomeria avenue, and then follows rural lanes and by-roads, through pleasant villages and busy country towns and mulberry fields. It is a silk-producing and apparently prosperous district, and many of the brown cottages with thatched and iris-ridged roofs add to their picturesqueness by the waterwheel attached to them that turns the spindles. If you halt for a wayside lunch you will be surrounded by a group of fascinating children, the living originals of our Japanese dolls, who watch your proceedings with intent interest and the most perfect good manners. In one point I was reminded of England. The road twists and bends at sudden angles like our own lanes, probably for the same reason : because it has grown, and not been made by an authority superior to the claims of private ownership.

Ikao is reached by a long ascent. The village, a collection of large bath-houses and shops, full of keepsakes for the visitors, is built in a picturesque staircase-street high up on the slope of a volcanic upland, among gardens and orchards, and commands a noble view to the northward over hill and dale. The steam from the natural hot springs rises from open channels between the houses and in front of the gay shops.

Some good, if short, climbs may be found among the peaks, but the indispensable walk is up the hill and across a great upland meadow, a weird place, which lies ringed round by a circle of volcanic heights. At its farther end a large tarn adds life to the landscape, and a little inn at the lake-head supplies a European luncheon. A mile—a very steep mile—beyond and below it on the southern slope is a strange temple, embedded in and overhung by the most fantastic crags, a scene literally reproducing the most grotesque landscapes of ancient Chinese art.

Somewhat farther south, within a long walk from Ikao, the mountaineer will come on the still more remarkable rock-scenery of Myogi-San. Its crags have been called the Japanese Dolomites, although geologically they have no claim to the title. Here there may still be a playground for the gymnast—though many of the "bad places" have already been provided with chains for the help of Japanese pilgrims in search of the picturesque. One of the slippery rock-faces that have to be traversed was indicated to me as that "where the Daimio wept." There were probably no chains in that Daimio's day! Another was pointed out as "where the Ambassador stopped." The latter statement obviously referred to Lord and Lady Bryce's visit, made a few weeks previously. It is only fair to the memory of a late President of the Alpine Club to add that on further enquiry it proved that an inopportune rainstorm had been the sole cause of his not going to the crowning crests.

The view from the upper ridges of the mountain of its quaint pinnacles and natural archways and tangled forests is well worth the climb. I know nothing quite like it. The village of Myogi, its temple buried in a grove of magnificent cryptomeria; its homely but good and thoroughly national inn with its dainty rooms and its miniature garden and fish-pond, where the big carp break the stillness of the night with their splashes, ought to realise every expectation the visitor may have formed of native Japan.

Apart from the by-corners just described, my principal hill walk was a three days' tramp into the heart of the Japanese Alps. This granite chain, with peaks attaining 10,000 feet in height, lies a full day's journey by train west of Tokyo and is accessible by two railways in about equal time. Mr. Weston has described it in his volume on *The Japanese Alps*. Considerable changes, however, have taken place since that work was written. There is now a carriage road from Matsumoto up the valley of the Adzusa-gawa to a point several miles above Inekoki. This road is being carried over the chain by a pass known as the Nomugi-toge. A good cattle path has also been constructed from Shimashima over the Tokugō-toge and the river bridged near Kamikochi, making that centre of the Japanese Alps reasonably accessible to travellers.

My plan was to cross from Shimashima the Tokugō-toge (toge = pass) to the headwaters of the Adzusa-gawa and then descend through its long gorges in two days, returning to the same spot It was full late in the season, and my companions' time and my powers were limited. Moreover, a party of British naval officers who had tried to climb the peaks ten days before had been beaten back by ice-coated rocks.

We approached the mountains by way of Nagano, an excellent example of a Japanese town, planted against the side of a hill, on which stands a remarkable group of temples. The surrounding heights resemble sunburnt Apennines. But from the train at the next junction-station a glimpse of snowy peaks is seen. Then the line is involved in lower hills, among which it climbs steeply over a charming little pass, known by the delightful name of " The Hill where the Aunt was abandoned " (see " Murray " for the legend), before it descends into the broad valley which skirts the eastern flank of the Alpine range.

Our immediate starting-point for the hills was Matsumoto, a large town, with a station on the Central Railway. Young Japan is alive to its picturesque possessions. On the platform you read " Change here for the Japanese Alps." All notices at stations are in English as well as Japanese, and you will generally find a list of " Objects of attraction in the Neighbourhood " ! The hotel towel (towels throughout Japan serve as a means for advertisement) has stamped on it " Japan Alps Station." But the advertisements were the only sign of European penetration. The town and the inn were purely Japanese. Here we hired a conveyance—an old brougham which was once smart—for the thirteen miles' drive across the upland plain which divided us from the mountains. On emerging from a long suburb the road passes through numerous hamlets, round crooked corners, and between fields and farmhouses, with here and there a silk factory or a temple half hidden in its grove. In front rises a snowy sky-line; broad bold shoulders and wooded slopes fall from it towards the plain. On one of the hilltops a forest was blazing fiercely and sending columns of yellow smoke into the sky. The general effect reminded me of the Bergamasque Alps seen from the Lombard plain, and the proportions were not dissimilar. The parallel may be pressed closer; the highest peaks have much the same character, except that the Japanese Alps, being in a more southern latitude, though they abound in snow-beds, fail to produce an authentic glacier.

At Shimashima, a village perched above a waters-meet in the gate of the hills, we found a rustic inn. It was kept by a good woman who did her best, not without success, to make her guests comfortable. Above the inn was a fine schoolhouse, with a playground fitted with modern gymnastic appliances.

Next morning we had before us a long ascent to a pass of over 7000 feet. The day broke wet with rainstorms of the vigour peculiar to Japan. We waited till 9 o'clock and then, encouraged by our porters, braved the weather. We had the reward we deserved; after a time the rain subsided, grew intermittent, and finally left off. Nothing could have been more beautiful than the first part of the walk. It was early in November. The well-made path gave us leisure to use our eyes. The precipitous walls of the gorge afforded a feast of the most brilliant autumn colours, reds and yellows. Firs stood out upon the crags with a regard for artistic effect they show only in Japan and Italy. Every corner displayed a vignette that surpassed the last. Presently the scene gained human interest. It was enlivened by a crowd of lumbermen, some nearly naked but for their straw capes and round hats, others clad in crimson tunics, who were busy helping great logs down a torrent swollen by the recent rain. Long was the ascent over the forest path, welcome the lunch round a fire in a wayfarer's shelter, tedious the final climb up interminable zigzags, somewhat frigid the arrival on the pass, where the wind blew over fresh-fallen snow. But a few yards beyond we were in shelter and able to enjoy the fine sight of an apparently virgin valley 2000 feet below, and the bold crags of Hodaka-yama (10,200 feet) just opposite and still nearly 3000 feet above us.

After gaining the wooded valley we had still three miles of flat walking beside the river before we reached in the gloaming, in eight hours from our start, the wooden inn and bath-house of Kamikochi, the Zermatt of the district. This solitary dwelling, at a distance in external aspect strangely like a Swiss inn, lies secluded in a region occupied only by hunters and a few shepherds, miles from any other human habitation or cultivation, and only to be reached over a high pass or through a deep gorge. The sleeping accommodation, however, is adequate, and the large natural hot bath most enjoyable. It is desirable, however, to bring provisions. The place is much frequented in summer by climbing parties of Japanese students and artists.

Next morning the ground was white with frost. We were in a flat-bottomed upland valley, where the stream meandered at large over a stony bed and all else was covered with dense forest. In the background towered grim granite ridges. Our course lay down the valley; after about an hour the mountain walls drew together and dropped into a deep gorge. The path down it had been carried away or blocked by landslips at the time of my visit. We had to wander up and down over spurs, round deep bays, or across the face of the almost perpendicular slopes left bare by recent or more ancient landslips. The foothold was always sufficient, but there was sometimes little to spare. Plenty of places would, before mountaineering came into vogue, have been described as spots in which "a single false step would be fatal." But there was nowhere any excuse for a false step. We had one noble view of the cliffs of Hodaka-yama closing the valley, and the glimpses into the gorge were wild and romantic. But after a time the frequent ups and downs, the vertical staircases where the tree-stumps served as steps, or the still more aggravating muddy banks grew tiresome. Presently our tiny track met a better-marked path. At the junction was a signpost giving the distance to Shirahone and expatiating on its merits as a quiet and healthful retreat in a style, as translated to us, quite worthy of a Tourist Agency. We were now on the path of a recognised native pass, the Abo-toge. But our fatigues were not over. After a steep descent a thousand feet of uphill had to be faced before we reached the brink of a deep hollow and saw the wooden roofs of the Baths of Shirahone at our feet.

The result of our day's walk, and more or less of all my mountain walks in Japan, was to impress on me the great influence of an excessive rainfall in modelling the surface of the hills. The valleys are deep and narrow, their sides torn and gashed by streams and waterfalls. The ridges, except in the case of the loftiest crests, are comparatively smooth and rounded. The distinctive charm of the scenery lies in the wooded gorges, with their exquisite combinations of crag and brilliantly coloured foliage. The upper glens and the forms of the peaks cannot vie with those of the Central Alps ; they are more on a level, literally as well as picturesquely, with those of the Maritimes, or of the range to which I have already compared them, the Bergamasque Alps. The landscapes in the district I traversed were as a rule confined ; there were no general views of a number of summits. The northern end of the chain seen from the neighbourhood of Nagano looked very inviting, a shapely double peak, Orenge-yama, 9974 feet, being a conspicuous object.

The bath-house of Shirahone lies in a bottom between steep banks. It is much frequented in the summer, despite its somewhat inaccessible situation. Here again we were comfortably housed and enjoyed the privilege of the social bath, which is the rule in rural Japan. The spot is, as Mr. Weston truly writes, " out of the world to a degree." While we were lacing our boots on the doorstep before leaving, three damsels, drawn by the unwonted sight from their morning bath, watched our proceedings with the innocence and in the costume of Eden.

Next day we followed the river through a succession of fine defiles. In the upper portion the path had been protected by a series of wooden galleries from the frequent earthfalls. But most of these were in ruins. In other places it was carried on long platforms skilfully constructed above the water. The higher slopes were already bare, but lower down the autumn tints were in full blaze. After some four hours' steady march we came, among picturesque rocks, on a wayside inn and a new carriage-road. It climbed high to avoid a last defile and then brought us to the large and prosperous village of Inekoki, where a carriage was in waiting. We drove through Shimashima, packed up some luggage at the inn, reached Matsumoto by dark, and Tokyo next morning by the night train, in time to attend the Mikado's Chrysanthemum Party in the garden of one of the imperial palaces.

The Japanese Alps are singularly accessible by rail. From Kioto and Nagoya there is the very beautiful Nakasendo railway, mounting through a delightful succession of pastoral landscapes and romantic ravines and in sight of the second mountain of Japan, Ontaki. From Tokyo you have a choice between the line by Kōfu, passing through many tunnels and past the charming Lake Sowa, and that by Myogi, Karuizawa, and Nagano. Karuizawa is the St. Moritz of the Farthest East, a group of hotels on a plateau 3300 feet above the sea, where invalided missionaries from the South Seas recruit during the summer months. The Myogi crags and Ikao are both within a day's journey, and there are many short climbs near at hand ; the principal is up the still active volcano of Asama, 8130 feet, the crater of which is used as a means of suicide by Japanese brides who cannot get on with their mothers-in-law and desire that their ghosts may haunt them, or by lovelorn couples whose parents forbid their union. Till recently such unfortunates leapt down one of the lofty waterfalls near Nikko, but guards having been placed round this spot, they have been driven to the " facilis descensus Averno " offered by Asama.

Finally, I would strongly urge on all visitors to Japan to take advantage of the facilities for travel which now open out the interior to every visitor who can accommodate himself to novel but not uncomfortable surroundings. The standard of comfort in most places is far above what that in out-of-the-way parts of the Alps was in my youth. The tourist who confines himself to the Treaty Ports and goes about grumbling that " the Real Japan " is at an end makes a most pitiable waste of his opportunities.

On my return to Tokyo the members of the Japanese Alpine Club were good enough to invite me to a banquet at a famous Japanese restaurant, which (like our " Cock " or " Cheshire Cheese ") prides itself on keeping up old traditions. The room we dined in was walled by silver panels delicately painted with flowers ; it looked out on a broad moonlit river hung with lanterns. The viands were choice and rare, the speeches models of brevity. I may venture to quote that in which my health was proposed : " One has come down to us from 20,000 feet, but the love of Beauty and Pure Colour will soon carry back the mountaineer to his proper sphere."

After the speeches some charming young ladies executed a Chrysanthemum Dance, while a photographer took a flashlight view of the company. Unfortunately he failed. It was the only mishap of an interesting evening.

I must not conclude this brief note on my modest excursion among the mountains of Japan without recalling the universal kindness and courtesy met with whether in native inns or on the open road. The mountaineer in the islands of the Far East need not fear any lack of understanding and intelligent sympathy. The Japanese have for centuries been mountain pilgrims ; they are now, for better or worse, adopting also the European point of view and treating their Alps as a playground. The idea of hill-climbing has to them never had any of the foolishness which it suggests to some less intelligent races, and they are most ready to help any strangers who come among them with that object

XI

THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

I DO not propose to enter here into any prolonged discussion as to the identification of Ruwenzori with the Mountains of the Moon of eighteenth-century and older atlases. But I am of course aware that it has been frequently disputed by geographers of reputation, and I had, perhaps, better give shortly my reasons for adopting the title of the following chapter.

There seems to me good reason to believe that more or less authentic reports concerning the features of the interior of Equatorial Africa reached the east coast long before the region of the Great Lakes had been penetrated by other than Arab traffickers. We find that Herodotus reports the existence of pygmies, that Ptolemy describes a snowy range feeding two lakes as the source of the Nile. In the Harleian Atlas (A.D. 1536) we see the Silva Lunae planted beside the Montes Lunae (Stanley's forest and Ruwenzori ?) close to one of these lakes. Stanley in his *Darkest Africa* (vol. ii. pp. 280-81) quotes from an Arab compiler who in A.D. 1686 set out to describe from earlier authorities the legendary snows of the Nile sources, and the inconveniences of climbing them. I give here a few extracts from his compilation :

> Others say that the Nile flows from snowy mountains, and they are the mountains called Kaf.
>
> There is a difference of opinion as to the derivation of the word Gumr. Some say that it ought to be pronounced Kamar, which means the Moon, but the traveller Ti Tarshi says that it was called by that name because "the eye is dazzled by the great brightness." . . . This chain has peaks rising up into the air and other peaks

> lower. Some have said that certain people have reached these mountains and ascended them, and looked over to the other side, where they saw a sea with troubled waters, dark as night, this sea being traversed by a white stream, white as day, which enters the mountains from the north. . . . Some say that people have ascended the mountain, and one of them began to laugh and clap his hands and threw himself down on the further side of the mountain. The others were afraid of being seized with the same fit, and so came back. It is said that those who saw it saw bright snows, like white silver, glistening with light. Whoever looked at them became attracted and stuck to them until they died, and this science is called human magnetism.
>
> It is said that a certain king sent an expedition to discover the Nile sources, and they reached copper mountains, and when the sun rose the rays reflected were so strong that they were burnt. Others say that these people arrived at bright mountains, like crystal, and when the sun's rays were reflected they burnt them.

Here we have, surely, a curious combination of statements as to local and exceptional features and incidents—vague and distorted statements it may be—but just the sort that might be expected in reports brought down to the coast, and transmitted from mouth to mouth till they reached civilised ears. We read of lakes, eternal snows, sunburn, and symptoms that suggest mountain-sickness. The next sentence reads oddly and has probably been ill-translated: or may we hold that the climbers who were "attracted and stuck to the snows till they died" were spiritual ancestors of Alpine Clubmen?

In the face of these statements it seems a large claim on our credulity to maintain that they had no connection with the local facts to which they correspond, but were a series of lucky inventions. That there was some traffic between the east coast of Africa and the interior from classical times onwards is certain, and what can be more probable than that the traders brought down from time to time rumours and legends from the heart of the Dark Continent. Travellers' tales have a bad reputation; but it is always worth looking for the kernel of truth that lurks in so many of them.

In 1883, while Honorary Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, I feared I was signing a death-warrant in drawing up the instructions to Joseph Thomson to find a way to the great lake between Kenia and Kilimanjaro. In 1905 I started with my friend Mr. Mumm and a Swiss guide to explore the Mountains of the Moon from the most unassuming railway station which is now the starting-point of a train which performs in 48 hours the journey of 580 miles that used to take three months. This line is one of the most marvellous products of British enterprise. A wedge run into the heart of a scarcely discovered continent, it crosses two ridges, one of which is as high as the top of the old St. Gotthard carriage-road, 8300 feet. But to the traveller an even greater attraction than the scenery is the fact that the best part of Noah's Ark promenades about the line, and that Adam and Eve may be seen watching the trains pass. Deer, antelopes and zebras in herds, jackals, hyaenas, baboons, ostriches, giraffes, all these we saw close at hand, and on our way down the train pulled up to give us a better view of a lioness who was calmly trotting beside it.

The Victoria Nyanza is reached at the head of the Kavirondo Gulf, whence a luxurious steamer carries visitors to Entebbe, the capital of the Uganda Protectorate. The northern lake-shores are low, hills of 300 to 400 feet, but they are exquisitely wooded. The open spaces are as green as English meadows, and the giant ant-heaps add to the illusion by their resemblance from a distance to haycocks.

Entebbe is in a situation of singular beauty. The town, a group of villas and a street or bazaar, has been planted on the steep side of a wooded peninsula and looks out east and south over a labyrinth of bays and islands towards the centre of the great inland sea. Its site has been more or less cut in a primaeval forest, and in the villa-gardens English roses blossom round the trunks of the tall smooth-stemmed giants of Africa. Unfortunately many of the groves have had to be sacrificed, since they were found to harbour the deadly fly that carries sleeping-sickness. The sunrises are the peculiar glory of Entebbe. The surface of the lake has at all times a greenish hue, at dawn it shines like a translucent emerald floor, the islands become bars of the deepest sapphire, the grove that still lines the water's edge forms a dark frame to the luminous landscape, while the white-robed natives in the foreground resemble the figures of a dream.

Beyond Entebbe civilised communications come to an end. Here the traveller first learns what "going on safari" means. He must organise a caravan and procure tents and provisions. He will find a great deal ready to his hand, but he may do well not to rely too exclusively on the local resources of Uganda. The language difficulty is considerable, unless one of the party can talk Swaheli—which, like Latin in the Middle Ages in Europe, is a means of intercourse between the superior natives throughout East Africa. We solved it by engaging a young Englishman, who had come up from Natal to try his luck under the Equator, to act as our interpreter and the controller of our caravan of sixty Uganda natives.

Either from Entebbe or Kampala it is 200 miles, or 12 days' good marching, more generally 14, to Fort Portal, the British post a few miles from the northern spur of the Ruwenzori Range. A march varies from 14 to 20 miles and covers two stages, at each of which is a rest-house or hut, protected by a fence. The day's journey begins at daybreak and is as a rule completed by noon. Towards evening a troop of villagers comes in with the carriers' food, unripe bananas, and much bargaining goes on. If there is a chief of any importance in the neighbourhood he brings a present, poultry or a lamb, and expects something in return. Strange to say, we found the most acceptable gift to be writing-paper and envelopes. Among the aristocracy of Uganda it is apparently held a high distinction to be a man of letters!

It is worth while to visit Kampala, a ride of 4 hours in a rickshaw from Entebbe. The former capital of Uganda is in one respect like Rome: it stands on several hills. On one hill is the English Station; on another the royal palace, in old days the scene of the many atrocities of King Mwanga, now the residence of his grandson, at the date of my visit a boy of thirteen. He had an English tutor to teach him lawn tennis and football, and to hack his subjects' shins instead of cutting off their ears and noses. So quickly does the old order change in Darkest Africa. A long street lined with the high fences of chequered bamboos that enclose the residences of the nobility of Kampala leads to the Protestant cathedral. It is called a cathedral, but it is no more like a real cathedral than a colonial bishop is like the real thing. The building is constructed almost entirely of reeds and has a vast thatched roof which is fine in colour and impressive from a distance. It is said to be capable of accommodating 2000 worshippers. Perhaps the best idea of it will be given by describing it as a gigantic Gothic summer-house. On a more distant hill stand the important buildings of the Roman Catholic Mission, which does good work throughout Uganda in encouraging agriculture and spreading the rudiments of civilisation. There is no visible town, except the bazaar, a long row of well-furnished booths. In the early morning it is a very pretty sight. "White cotton nightgown country" Uganda might then be called. The shining figures, in their flowing robes, reminded me of the inhabitants of the Celestial City in some old Florentine picture. The illusion vanished when on nearer approach the colour of their faces became visible.

The walk or ride (we were successful in hiring two mules at Entebbe) to Fort Portal may be roughly divided into three sections.[1] The scenery in each differs, and each has its distinctive character. We began by traversing an upland region cut by shallow valleys. Their flat bottoms contain not streams but swamps, from which foul water oozes out to the north to join the Nile. Here as elsewhere Africa gives one the idea of the work of a 'prentice hand. The architect of the Uganda plateau omitted to give it any sufficient general slope to carry off its drainage. On the heights are many hamlets and banana groves, in the hollows either exquisite little samples of tropical forest, or, more often, fields of papyrus covering stinking, stagnant mud. These the path traverses on narrow causeways.

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[1] I understand a motor road has been recently made, or is in course of construction.

After a large shallow lake, crowded with islets (Lake Isolt), has been passed on the left, our second stage is reached. The hills become bolder and more individual, about the size of English downs, the valleys wider and less insanitary. There is a good deal of bush, but no continuous forest. Here (as old travellers say) there be many fierce lions. Within an hour I marked the tracks of five on the path as I was walking ahead of the caravan one morning. The only objects I encountered, however, were a Roman Catholic missionary, travelling with a donkey, a hammock and a bicycle, which he rode alternately, and an official from the Upper Congo, to which Uganda was in 1905, thanks to the railway, the direct postal route.. A few hours later I was thrown from my mule, and a good deal hurt, so that I had to be carried in a litter for a week.

After another five or six days' march the country assumed a more varied aspect. The hills were no longer scattered without apparent design or connection. Something like a continuous range rose in front. We were approaching the edge of the high Uganda plateau, the watershed between the streams flowing to the Victoria Nile and to Lake Edward. The green saddle which we crossed at the head of a very pretty flowery valley was a mild affair.

From this point we might in clear weather have seen Ruwenzori ; but that excitement was reserved for two days later, when we were camped in the vicinity of a mission station called Butiti. The spot is 17 miles (one day's march) from Fort Portal and about 40 miles from the snows. Hence we had the view, denied to our predecessors, which Sir H. Johnston drew from imagination and inserted in his book. His fundamental idea was sound, but he was misled by trying to incorporate the legends of cartographers.

The prospect before us was a striking one. In the immediate foreground stood bold green hills ; beyond them we looked across a rolling country to a long range, rising from low foot-hills at either end, ridge behind ridge, to its final comb of shining snow. The vision, welcome as it was, was rather fascinating than sublime. The precipices and ice-fields were not, like those of the Himalaya, built up on a scale to excite awe; the general effect of the range was such as the European traveller is accustomed to. We might have been looking at a bit out of the panorama of the Western Alps from the Superga above Turin.

There was one point that struck us even before we began to analyse the details of the range. There was no doubt whatever as to the highest visible peak, no more than there is in the case of Mont Blanc when seen from Geneva.

Starting from the south the first snow lay in streaks on a massive rock I may distinguish provisionally as the Southern Peak; a broad snowless depression, obviously meant for, and as we subsequently learnt, used as a pass, divided it from a bold comb of rock and ice. To its right a glacier-clad ridge stretched to the dominating summit, a shapely snow-peak of a most inviting aspect. It looked easy. There seemed nothing to prevent any one armed with an ice-axe from walking straight up the snow-ridge from the saddle at its base. Misgivings were banished; we began to count our chickens prematurely.

It may be well to pause here, and before approaching it nearer, to give an outline sketch of the character of the Ruwenzori Range according to our present knowledge. Some of the early explorers of Ruwenzori have employed phrases which I think they would hardly have hazarded had they been brought up in the traditions of the Alpine Club. To compare the range with the Alps or Caucasus is to risk giving a very exaggerated impression. Its snows have been said to rival those between Mont Blanc and the St. Gotthard, a distance of 100 miles. Between the Simplon and the Gries would be nearer the mark. The glaciers of Ruwenzori cover about 10 square miles. I should roughly divide the chain as follows: at either end 12 miles of low foot-hills, next 20 miles of high ridges green to the top, and in the centre 16 miles of Alpine peaks and glaciers.

It was a rare day in more ways than one, the last of our journey to Fort Portal. As our path wound over the shoulders of high downs I recognised the black serrated crest of the Portal Peaks, buttressed towards the plain by the army of green hills which divides the basins of the Wimi and Mubuku torrents. We lost the view by plunging into a dark wood, a sample of the famous forest beyond the Semliki in which Stanley wandered. In one place the brushwood was torn and the path pounded by the recent passage of a herd of elephants. Toro is the home of elephants. It is also a land of streams. In the thickest of the grove we heard the welcome sounds of running water and came on a considerable torrent, tearing its way through the tropical greenery.

Fort Portal is finely situated on a hill in open country, a few miles from the northern spur of Ruwenzori. It consists of a fort, a large camp of beehive huts occupied by the Nubian garrison, a few Indian stores, and one or two official residences. The Collector was unluckily absent, but by his kindness my party were installed in comfort in his house. From the balcony there is a very pretty view along the range, but the central group is hidden and only a few snow patches are visible on its northern outliers and one white speck in the extreme south.

Fort Portal is over 5000 feet above the sea, the valley of the Semliki or western Nile, a few miles west of it, is under 3000 feet. It is a pleasant, almost level, walk of 2 hours past a small lake full of wild ducks and water-lilies and over a level grassy upland to the brink of the escarpment. From a hillock to the left of the pass there is a most impressive view. In the foreground the last spur of Ruwenzori makes its plunge into the deep-lying trench through which the Nile wanders in wide curves on its way to the Albert Lake. The plain is green and apparently cultivated in parts, burnt up and red in others, dotted everywhere with acacia groves. Opposite rises the long range which forms the watershed of Africa, breaking down in cliffs to the Lake, the waters of which shimmer faintly in the far distance.

Two miles from Fort Portal on the opposite hill dwells a black king, Kasagama by name, whom the Government recognises and supports. He has for neighbours a colony of Church of England missionaries, with their wives and children, who live in comfortable houses with pleasant gardens. Under the instructions of the Collector and through the able hands of his Katakiro, or Prime Minister, the king organised our transport for Ruwenzori. The missionaries proved valuable sources of information as to climate and paths. Mr. Maddox, one of them, had been up to the glaciers. By him and by the native chiefs we were repeatedly assured that there are two dry seasons on Ruwenzori, midsummer and mid-winter. Then, they said, it is much colder on the mountain, and the higher swamps are frozen.

After four days' rest in our comfortable quarters at Fort Portal our caravan marched again. In ordinary circumstances, that is when the path is dry and the streams are unflooded, it is a three days' journey to the highest hamlet in the Mubuku valley: we took four. The first incident was our farewell to Kasagama, the Kabaka or ruler of Toro, who was waiting on the brow below the gates of his spacious compound to greet us and to be photographed. A few hundred yards farther on we passed through a pleasant avenue forming the approach to the Catholic Mission, here, as in most cases in Africa, a centre of cultivation.

The next three days we spent in climbing up and down in "forthrights and meanders" along a switchback path through the tortuous recesses of a labyrinth of fertile but for the most part uncultivated foot-hills.

Between the Wimi and Mubuku torrents a long, low green spur runs out at right angles to the Ruwenzori range. The scenery was always pleasing but never grand, as the valleys were too narrow to admit of any view of the higher ranges. Every day we had a thunderstorm, and the steep and slippery ascents and descents were trying to our porters, who made but slow progress. On the second day, the advance-guard, having waded the Wimi without much difficulty, sat down in a lovely dell near a banana plantation to wait for the baggage. Hours passed, while thunderstorms of unusual vigour broke upon us. Our Alpine guide and I sat under our umbrellas, like moist toadstools, wondering what could have delayed our companions. At last the ragged regiment appeared on the horizon and slowly straggled down the winding path. The Wimi ford had been the cause of delay; a porter had fallen, and dropped into the stream the bag containing our rope and climbing boots. A search party had been despatched after it, and was still in the rear. A little later it returned successful. But it was too late to move again, though there was no village near, and our men consequently supped badly and were far from happy.

Next morning we mounted a side glen which brought us to a gap leading into the Mubuku basin. The descent, of some length, was through charming scenery, a narrow vale with banana plantations and flowering trees. This opened on the broad valley of the Mubuku, here encompassed by low and verdant foot-hills, but closed at its head by steep mountain slopes and the dark crags of the Portal Peaks. The usual ford was impassable, but with the aid of the rope we got across without much difficulty a hundred yards lower down the stream.

A level track brought us in an hour to an open space beside the Mubuku, here a clear dancing burn, brown enough to please a Scotsman, close to which was a chief's enclosure and some native huts. This spot (4700 feet) is known as Ibanda, and there is a good picture of the view from it in Sir H. Johnston's book. The snows were in sight, and on their right the steep faces of the Portal Peaks shone between the showers with frequent waterfalls. We pitched our tents beside the river.

The valley here should be interesting to a geologist. It is fairly broad, perhaps half a mile, and falls with a gentle uniform slope. Its alluvial surface is strewn with huge boulders, gneiss, and schist, which have obviously come from the central ranges. How were they transported : on a slow glacial sledge or on an express waterburst like that which destroyed the Baths of St. Gervais ? In my opinion the latter agency is the more probable ; a flood caused by some earthfall damming temporarily an upper glen. The extent of past glacial action in this region is not a problem to be solved off-hand with such limited opportunities of observation as fell to our lot. At about 7000 feet on the slope at the entrance to the upper Mubuku Valley there is a bank which seen from Ibanda looks like a moraine. But it may well be the result of gashes cut by impetuous streams. The upright rocks higher up the valley have smooth surfaces that may be taken for the result of glacial polishing. But the rock is of a kind that naturally tends to slabbiness. The flatter crags are too densely smothered in vegetation to be easily examined. Of minor recent oscillations I did note distinct proof in a moraine, now overgrown, some five hundred yards below the present termination of the glacier.

I may conveniently make here some general remarks as to the structure of the range, which has now been pretty well ascertained. Its inmost portion consists mainly of granite, or granitoid gneiss. When this central block was thrust up dark mica schists and other varieties of the crystalline series of metamorphic rocks were thrown asunder and piled against its flanks. In these, masses of crystals are found, which are distributed as charms among the natives over a wide tract of country. In the popular belief, at any rate of tribes who dwell at some distance, the shining summits themselves are held to be blocks of crystal. The student of early Alpine literature will be reminded of the tradition recorded and even accepted by some of the old Swiss scientists, that the crystals found near the St. Gotthard were formed of ice hardened in the course of countless ages of continual frost.

Ruwenzori, it must be borne in mind, is not volcanic. Round its base, where doubtless lines of weakness were produced by the upheaval of the great range, many traces of volcanic action exist. There are, particularly on its south-east flanks, a number of crater-lakes. But some of the earlier visitors, misled by what they saw on the outskirts of the mountains, have been far too prone to call every hollow a crater and every height a cone. The suggestion that there was once a great central cone is without any justification.

Some preliminary notes as to the character of the central valley we visited, may help to a better understanding of my narrative. To convey in words any precise picture of topography or scenery is always difficult. I find Alpine comparisons helpful, and I shall therefore continue to use them even though they may offend certain critics. The Mubuku Valley mounts in a series of steps like Val Formazza, or the

Val di Genova. Above Ibanda, the lower valley gradually narrows, until it is closed by a high spur projecting from the southern hills. Behind this spur lies a broad basin in which several streams meet. The Mubuku itself pours down into it in a continuous cataract of some 2000 feet. When this height has been gained the traveller enters a mountain glen narrow and steep-sided, and fairly level, until it is abruptly terminated by a lofty cliff and a waterfall. Beyond these the valley rises in three more successive steps separated by swampy levels. The uppermost is enclosed in a cirque of cliffs capped by glaciers, which flow from a névé rising in comparatively gentle slopes to an icy ridge connecting two rock-peaks, Kiyanja and Johnston's Duwoni. The rise from Ibanda to the foot of the ice is 8300 feet, to the watershed about 10,300 feet. The glaciers are rather Pyrenean than Alpine in their dimensions and character. They may compare favourably with the ice north of the valley of Chamonix on the Buet and Dent du Midi range ; they are puny compared to the glaciers of the loftier Alpine groups.

The highest village on the Mubuku, Bihunga (6800 feet), is situated not in the valley but on the spur already mentioned, and it is a short, hot climb up to it. There is just room for a small camp on the steep slope below the few beehive huts. Above them we found the tent of a negro who had been sent out by an English official to collect natural history specimens on Ruwenzori. He said he had found little, but our experience of him did not lead us to believe that he had tried hard. He fled before a heavy downpour, leaving behind him the cover of *Punch* and a page from an illustrated London newspaper, incongruous and unexpected objects in the wilds of Ruwenzori.

At Bihunga we changed our carriers. We dispensed temporarily with our Entebbe troop, our incompetent cook, and our dilatory waiter. In their place we took a company of the tribe of the district, the Bakonjo, men better accustomed to the mountain and its climate. Their clothes were scanty skins or rags, but we provided them, to their great satisfaction, with blankets which we promised should, as a reward for good behaviour, become their own on our return. Never have I had better porters in a far country. They were willing, good-tempered, and helpful, and their head man kept up communications with our base and brought up provisions when needful. The provisions mostly walked up in the shape of sheep. The way in which these men carried heavy loads of 50 lbs. up the slipperiest mud-slides and over barricades of fallen timber was astonishing. I can see no reason why, in fair weather, a moderate-sized caravan should not camp as long as it likes at the head-waters of the Mubuku. If sufficient wraps are taken the sickness among the carriers, which affected Sir Harry Johnston's plans, may, it seems, be avoided.

Like most mountain regions, however, Ruwenzori has been a refuge for various tribes, and in other parts of it the traveller may not find such serviceable companions. One explorer has complained that he was purposely misled and made to wander up and down in the forest, losing all his goods. He points a contrast by remarking that within a few miles of this adventure the Europeans at Fort Portal were grumbling at a delay of three days in the English post. One tribe are stated by the missionaries to be cannibals, with reservations; that is to say, they do not eat their own relations but pass on their remains to friends in the hope that the courtesy will be returned.

Our start from Bihunga was delayed by the rain, which was to be our too constant companion. From the brow of the spur, half an hour above the village, there is an enchanting view. A thousand feet below lies a great bowl filled by tropical forests of the utmost luxuriance. The tree-tops are broken only in a few places, where brown patches and curling smoke indicate new clearings for cultivation. Dark rugged peaks and ridges mingle overhead with the shining vapours. The path plunges, and the traveller is soon buried in a thicket of tree-ferns, dracaenas, lobelias, wild bananas. Stately smooth-stemmed trees spread a shade high overhead; they are all new to Europeans and have none but Latin names. The ground is carpeted with home-like ferns and orchids; clear streams dance over rocky channels. It is a gay woodland, more akin to the forests of Sikkim than to the outliers of the great Congo Forest that shroud the hills of Ankole above Lake Edward in majestic gloom.

After crossing this basin the track climbs at first under welcome shade, then up a long, open and warm hillside until it gains the narrow, projecting crest of a spur, along which it runs for some distance. Looking back we had an exquisite view over the folds of forest and the foot-hills to the golden expanse of the level country, in the centre of which a small lake (Lake Kobokora) shone out with jewel-like brightness. On the horizon, the soft outlines of the Ankole hills, the rampart of the Uganda plateau, glowed in aerial colours.

Presently the ridge, almost an arête, broadened somewhat, and a great rock protruded on its crest. Here our troop proposed to halt. The afternoon was young, and I objected —my bane in distant travel is impatience—but a sudden and heavy rainstorm settled the argument in their favour. The camping-ground was very limited, and water had to be fetched from a distance. Two of our men sent in its quest were benighted in the steep forest, and spent several uneasy hours in fear of leopards before they found their way back.

Next morning it still rained. Before long the path, hitherto fair, entered at once the upper glen and the bamboo zone and became execrable. Frequent halts had to be made while our men reopened a track between the dripping stems of the bamboos. At each halt a fire was lighted, and we clustered round it, shabby Europeans and shivering natives, a sorry spectacle. The track got worse and worse—it was an alternation of almost perpendicular sodden banks and deep bogs. We either sank up to our knees and were held fast in black sludge or stumbled over stumps and stems. We had hoped for mountaineering, we found ourselves mud-larking !

At last we heard the sound of water, and came out on the bank of the Mubuku, a full torrent. Earlier travellers had all crossed it with ease. Our strongest natives tried the ford and failed. A reconnoitring party was despatched upstream. After a long absence their leader returned. His speech was unintelligible, but his aspect was cheerful. I had clambered eagerly after him through the jungle for a hundred yards when a bridge met my astonished eyes. The ingenious Bakonjos had utilised a boulder in midstream to build a bridge with long bamboo poles. A minute later I was shouting to my companions from the farther bank.

The condition of this ford, which had given no trouble to our predecessors, may serve as a proof of the exceptionally bad rains we encountered. They extended beyond the hills. Mr. Haldane, the Collector of Toro, wrote to me, "You found the mountain at its very worst, in such awful, misty, cold weather."

Beyond the bridge we walked, or rather splashed and waded, through a beautiful dripping forest. The rain had ceased for the moment, and fitful gleams of sunshine lit up the rich colours of the vast heights that hemmed us in. Presently we saw in front the Mubuku tumbling in a noble cataract down the great cliff which closes the valley. Kichuchu, the first of the so-called rock-shelters or native camping-grounds, lies at the base of this cliff, where it slightly overhangs. To reach it we floundered for several hundred yards through a morass and down the channel of a stream which in better seasons may possibly be a path. Kichuchu may then be a rock-shelter; as we found it, it was a dripping-well. My companions succeeded in making a fire and cooking. Mumm was excellent in the part of Mark Tapley: my melancholy only produced a reaction in his spirits.

Next morning we started to climb the great step in the valley in pouring rain. Henceforth I only mention the weather when it is fine.

Rude ladders have been fixed against the lowest rocks, but they are not necessary, and in coming down we avoided them. The scramble is long and steep, and was rendered arduous by the abominable muddiness of the path, on which it was easy to slide back farther than one had stepped forward. But there is no real difficulty, nothing but what may be met with on many a chalet path in the Alps. On the top we found a level meadow. We were now nearly 11,000 feet over sea level and above the dense hedge of the bamboo zone in a region of new and strange flowers, a weird and grotesque woodland which no one who has once penetrated it is ever likely to forget. Here were open glades filled with the upright stalks, twelve to fifteen feet high, of lobelias, green obelisks which reminded me in shape of the tombstones in a Turkish cemetery. About us stood tree-*Senecios*, or giant groundsel, gaunt writhing stems crowned at the top with mops of spiky leaves, fit for a witch's broom ; the ground was carpeted with a shrub growing some two to three feet high covered with white everlasting flowers. Blackberries and violets had wandered into this strange company. Among the plants representing a northern flora Mr. Dawe has also recognised the willow herb, a chervil, a ranunculus, a geranium. But these home-like touches were lost in the strange aspect of the larger growths. We followed the obscure track over bush, over briar, through mud and mire, until we came to a fallen forest. The prostrate trunks and branches formed a continuous barricade, which took half an hour to cross. The logs are hard, slippery, and covered with moss, which peels off under the boot. The actual soil lies six or eight feet below, and great care is needed to avoid the horrid pitfalls which gape at every other step and threaten danger to limb, if not to life. Beyond this obstruction we again crossed the stream—I by a fallen trunk, my companions by wading—and climbed beside a fine waterfall another step in the valley. At the farther end of the next level we came to the rock shelter known as Buamba, a picturesque but very inconvenient camping-ground. The soil was swampy, and as if we had not water enough already, a pretty cascade tumbled from the impending cliff, fortunately not on us.

This camp has a story which has apparently escaped my predecessors. Sir H. Johnston tells us it is called Buamba, meaning " up aloft," because of its situation. Our head man, however, declared that it was named after a hill tribe known as Buamba, who dwell on the Semliki side of the mountains, and were accustomed to cross the high pass lying south of Mount Baker and come down as far as this spot in order to sell pottery and skins to the Bakonjo, who met them here. Of late years, since the Katwe road has become safe, the pass (14,200 feet) has, we were told, been disused. We had already noticed in the view from Butiti this broad, snowless gap as a probable pass. There are several native passes over the lower southern and northern portions of the range, but this appears to be the only one that traverses the central group. The Duke of the Abruzzi camped on it.

From Buamba to Bujongolo (12,500 feet) is a short walk, about an hour. We allowed it to be made a day's journey because we were anxious to give the weather, always detestable, time to improve. The accommodation at Bujongolo is a shade better than at Buamba. There is a convenient dry and sheltered site for one six-feet-square tent, and there are a number of holes and crannies for porters. Logs have been laid as bridges between the boulders ; they afford dry wood for the next comer, who is bound in honour to replace them. But it is impossible to stroll a yard in any direction without getting into water up to the knees or falling among hopeless entanglements of rocks and trees. Nor is there any extensive outlook to afford distraction. In the direction of the watershed impending rocks cut off all view. In the opposite direction, across the valley, one summit was visible at moments through the streaming vapours, a black buttress exposing a long slope of highly tilted rocks of a most forbidding aspect, alternately powdered with snow and gleaming with wet as the storms came and passed over. In these conditions it produced an impression which in clear weather it might hardly have upheld.

Half an hour higher we passed another overhanging cliff that might serve as a shelter. At this point the glacier crescent at the head of the valley is first visible. The glen becomes very narrow and rises steadily, bending to the right. The highest reach is again a level and a marsh. The scenery is imposing and most singular. On the precipitous hillsides and rocky ledges tree-heaths drip with the perpetual moisture. Gaunt and grey, densely covered and draped in preposterous masses of moss and lichens, they look like the vegetable ghosts of a vanished world. Lobelias, tree-*Senecios* and *Helichrysums* grow upon the cliffs high above the lowest ice and up to over 14,000 feet. Higher still the rocks are stained yellow by mosses and lichens, no doubt the cause of the golden belt below the snow noticed from a distance by Stanley. A similar effect may be noted on the seaward crags of the Maritime Alps. The explorer is now too immediately under the range for the highest peaks to be effectively seen. What was to the north or east of the icefall we never saw free from mist. Looking back, however, a bold rocky mass was conspicuous south-east of the pass formerly used by the Buamba.

Some five hundred yards below the ice-tongue the slope steepens, and the track passes through a grove of senecios growing on an old moraine. The glacier now terminates at 13,600 feet in a cleft between steep rocks ; the stream that flows from it in a triple cascade is insignificant. The water is clear—the first clear water I saw in Uganda. It is probably rather the issue of some sub-glacial spring than the meltings of the ice. In Switzerland, in winter, the glaciers discharge clear water, while those in whose beds there are no sources discharge nothing. Glaciers in tropical and sub-tropical regions lose most of their substance by evaporation. The Himalayan torrents bear no proportion to the size of the snowfields.

We were about one and a half hours from camp. Heavy showers swept the sky. We lit a fire under the rocks and ate. With a little spadework it would be easy to establish a camp at this spot, which is in many ways preferable to Bujongolo. There is, however, no natural shelter for porters.

A slight clearing encouraged my companions to push on. I lingered a moment, and when I started found that they were already well ahead and had passed the so-called cave where the first explorer left a rope. I was still stiff from my mule-tumble of a fortnight before, and, feeling confident that this was only a reconnaissance, gave up the pursuit, and spent my time in nursing the fire, catching glimpses of the upper peaks, contemplating the glacial source of the Nile, which vindicated so triumphantly Ptolemy against his critics, and reflecting what a very odd corner of the world I had got to.

My companions came back before I expected them. They had soon reached the cliff that stopped earlier explorers, and climbed up it; then they had taken to the ice, and had had a fair amount of step-cutting on narrow edges and one or two queer passages between ice and rock before they got to the top of the icefall and the verge of the easy and gently sloping upper snowfield. There was nothing to stop them from going higher but the dripping mists and sleet which now enveloped them. They left the farther climb for another day, which never came; for it took us some time to realise that the weather would exhaust our patience before we had exhausted its spite.

We all went back to Bujongolo. Wet fogs, cold rain, and sleet again enveloped and persecuted us. The continual gloom and damp affected our muscles and our morals; there was nothing dry in camp, and it was impossible to dry anything. When the order to retreat was given no one protested; we were almost glad of it.

Mudslides are better to descend than to climb. Despite a late start we got down early in the afternoon to our first bivouac—that is, we compressed three days' march into one. There were no bridges to build and no bamboo brakes to hack out. From the brow above Buamba we had a noble view down the valley. On the crest of one of its wooded spurs is set a little tarn which some of our forerunners call, probably without reason, a crater lake. It is thousands of feet higher than any other crater lake, and I very much doubt its having a volcanic origin. Next morning we enjoyed the lovely descent down the fern-clad open banks into the bowl of tropical forest. We had come, like Moses, out of the local cloud, and bright sunshine lit up the eastern plain and made the little Lake Kobokora glow like a diamond in its centre. At Bihunga, where we arrived just in time to escape a heavy storm, we found our camp and followers, and having bidden a cordial farewell to our Bakonjo companions, who had behaved excellently to the last, moved on to the open valley at Ibanda.

Here we rested a day. What had been going on meantime in the mountains was indicated by the river. The

Mubuku, in ordinary times a pretty trout stream, came down in a sudden spate, filling its channel from bank to bank, rearing in yellow waves six feet high against every obstacle, and tearing the tall reeds in bundles out of the shallows. It was a fine sight in itself, and a welcome testimony to our prudence in abandoning the heights.

On the following morning we were hastily summoned by the porters. When we came out of our tents we found them gazing with wonder at an extraordinary sight. The sky was generally overcast, but low on the eastern horizon a narrow belt was clear. Into this belt the sun had just climbed over the hills of Ankole. The peaks of Ruwenzori were visible against a leaden vault. The sun's rays, as they struck the snows, painted them not an " awful rose " but a deep blood-red. The lower rocks and woods—this was an effect I have never seen elsewhere—were turned into a rich purple or strawberry colour. In the circumstances there seemed a demoniacal mockery in this farewell appearance of the mountain. In five minutes the spectacle was over and a curtain of mists speedily fell on the snows.

At the ford of the Mubuku, which we fortunately were not called on to cross, we left our former track and turned to the right, up a pretty side glen. Our path, devious and narrow as an English footpath, led us through charming cultivated country. The valleys were green with banana groves and fields of maize, broken by groups of palms or bright red-blossomed Kaffir trees. The grass, knee-deep, the height of an English hayfield, was full of flowers, amongst them tawny gladioli ; convolvuluses trailed over the bushes their large blue blossoms. In front lay a broad valley, partly filled by the shining surface of a large lake, and beyond, some thirteen miles off, rose a range of mountains with smooth but bold outlines. They reminded me of the Apennines between Rome and Naples, but the atmospheric colouring was richer than that of Italy and more to be compared in intensity (though different in tone, owing to the greater abundance of moisture) to that of Greece. The skies in Uganda are a perpetual pleasure. I use the plural advisedly. The dome overhead is never monotonous: in each quarter of the heavens there is something different and beautiful going on; one is never tired of watching the changing complexity of the clouds, the delicate shifting of vapours, or the sudden onset of the local thunderstorms on the transparent fields of blue. There were other distractions close at hand for a traveller tired of sky-gazing. On the plains herds of deer and antelopes were always feeding. On the fourth day, as we marched southwards, the path passed close to a bay of Lake George[1] and was entirely poached by the recent passage of a herd of hippopotamuses. A mile farther on I had a rare treat. Strolling alone in front of the caravan I came on a round lake, about a quarter of a mile across, surrounded by a dry beach. It served as a paradise for birds. On the water floated great white cormorants, round them circled an obsequious crowd of ducks of various sorts and sizes. On the shore there was a promenade of ibises, herons, pelicans, geese, I know not what. Golden-crested cranes danced about delicately in little groups of four or six, giving themselves the conscious airs and graces of well-dressed beauties. It was the sort of spectacle one finds represented in the illustrations to children's natural history books, but never expects to see in Nature.

By this time the Ruwenzori range on our right had sunk into soft green hills. We crossed two of their last and lowest spurs, passing between deeply set crater-lakes, and from a third suddenly saw before us the wide expanse of Lake Edward, the most remote of the Nile lakes and the last to be discovered. It has by far the most mountainous shores of the three, and, as it is just not too big for all its shores to be visible at once, presents a very imposing appearance. The range on the west which falls abruptly into its waters must rise 7000 feet above them. Its long crest reminded me of Monte Baldo, seen from the Lake of Garda. Far away on the southern horizon in the clearness after a storm we recognised the forms of the great volcanoes, 13,000 feet high, which rise close to the watershed of Africa between the Nile sources and Tanganyika. The grassy shore below us was studded with beehive huts and the water alive with fishing canoes.

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[1] Sir H. Johnston's Lake Dweru: earlier maps call it Lake Ruisamba.

Next day we walked four miles in order to visit the salt lake of Katwe, which is a source of revenue to the chief of Toro. It lies, picturesquely framed in palm groves, in a deep basin among bare grassy downs. A narrow ridge, on which stands a ruined fort, separates it from the great lake. Its chief charm, as we saw it, lay in the extraordinary brilliancy of the reflections in its waters. The blue of the lower spurs of Ruwenzori was unbelievable. In the opposite direction we enjoyed an almost panoramic view of Lake Edward with its green promontories and islands and impending ranges, on which thin columns of smoke gave token of human habitation.

Our onward course led us along the north-eastern shore of the lake. It was fringed with reeds and beautiful blossoming bushes ; great white cormorants floated on its waters. The short flowery meadow herbage formed a delightful contrast to the elephant grass, twelve feet high, that too often cuts off all outlook on the paths of northern Toro. Circling over it and hungrily chasing their insect food, were flocks of swallows lately arrived in their winter quarters. The path keeps along the lake shore under a low hill. It does not seem to have occurred to the earlier passers-by to mount to the brow. At any rate, they have not described what is seen from it. Early maps show Lake George as a backwater of Lake Edward. This was a curious mistake, without any foundation in fact. What met our eyes as we crested the hill was a sight new to me in Uganda : a noble river, some 600 to 800 yards wide, flowing in graceful curves with a clear smooth and strong current between high wooded banks. Tall palms and strange trees of even greater height hung over the water in the hollows or climbed up towards the open grasslands, behind which the blue hills of Ankole rose in the distance. On the tree-tops were many enormous nests of fishing birds, and a canoe containing some native fishers shot round the lowest corner in sight, paddling against the current. The landscape was one of the most imposing I saw in Africa.

Returning to the path and losing sight of the river for a mile or two we came upon it again at the ferry, where it falls into the lake. Here we found a flotilla waiting for us; a "dug-out," that is, a boat hollowed out of a single gigantic stem, and several very patched-up and leaky bark canoes. The farther bank was the popular bathing-place for the villages on the shore. Lake Edward enjoys the distinction among African lakes of being free from crocodiles. We are far here from the primeval nudity of Kavirondo, and the dark ladies managed their blue gowns with at least as much decorum as Parisians at a French seaside resort. On the shores of the lake Indian corn, introduced by Arab traders, is extensively cultivated. Our next day's march to Kichlamba (14 miles) lay across a plain to the foot of the Ankole hills which we had had so long for companions. Halfway we came on a skull in the middle of the road. I was told that it was all that remained of a native who a week before had gone to sleep under a tree and been devoured by a lion. Soon afterwards our Nubian escort had an altercation with a man who was, contrary to law, carrying a naked spear, and arrested him.

That evening, while Mumm shot antelopes, I got a hazy view of Ruwenzori, three snow-peaks rising over lower heights. Next day we climbed up, into and through the hills, a lovely march. The valleys were pitted with ancient craters, some dry, others containing lakes, set in the richest tropical vegetation. Our prisoner made a bolt for one of these hollows, and would have escaped into a thick banana plantation had he not near the bottom slipped and turned a somersault. The pursuing Nubian went over after him, but was the first to recover himself and, to our regret, secured the runaway.

At the head of a narrow glen we crossed a steep pass, from the crest of which there was a glorious view to the south over a vast deep green forest stretching away towards the eastern shore of Lake Edward. It is akin to the great Congo Forest, in which Stanley wandered; the general character was sombre, perhaps it was not the season of flowers. Straight, smooth trunks ran up to an enormous height, bearing aloft a dense canopy of foliage ; the ground was carpeted with dark-leaved plants ; brooks trickled through the hollows. After an hour's march in the shade we camped with some woodcutters at its edge.

Late in the evening, in place of the natives bringing bananas for our porters, the Nubian soldier in charge appeared with three prisoners and a wounded man. The villagers carrying our men's food had been met and assaulted by a party from another village, who had shouted that the white men must not be supplied, and in the scuffle one of the carriers had been badly wounded by a spear-thrust in the arm. The Nubian, being armed with a gun, had run in three of the assailants. Next morning, accordingly, we started with several ill-favoured negroes tied together with Alpine rope. The event of the afternoon was a terrific tropical thunderstorm. The noise was tremendous, and the downpour incessant for an hour and a half. When a bouquet of flashes hit the ground all round us I must confess that I felt nervous as to what they might hit next. It proved, however, the final flare-up.

The country we had been going through is an intricate highland region. Seen from the shore of Lake Edward its hills appear to run north and south ; this is, however, only the effect of the escarpment of the great Uganda tableland. The main ridges in Ankole run east and west, and are high green downs reaching 6000 feet or more above the sea and 2000 feet above the plateau. Between them the space is occupied by the oddest possible collection of round-topped green hillocks sprinkled about thickly and without order. In form they reminded me more of the hills old cartographers used to dot about their maps than of anything I have seen in Nature elsewhere.

We camped in a hollow glen, surrounded by high grass and bush—a most unhealthy spot, where I caught malaria. At dawn we were told that a man with a spear had been seen prowling near our tents. This was unpleasant, as we were not far from the spot where, in the preceding May, the Collector of the District had been speared through the heart while he sat reading in the verandah of a rest-house.

Our Nubians further asserted that the hilltops were thick with spearmen. I suspect there was a good deal of exaggeration. But shouts were certainly audible from the bush, and they were interpreted to us as meaning, " The white men are starting." The friends of our prisoners may have been hanging about with a view to a rescue. We were too strong a party to be assaulted in the open. Their only chance would have lain in a rush out of the copses that frequently overhung the zigzags of the path. There was an opportunity, however, for a display of martial ardour; we kept close order, and Mumm, as commander-in-chief, bristled with cartridges. His rôle was modified by the sudden appearance of Ruwenzori, one white peak excelling all the rest until it was overcome by the clouds. The warrior was converted into a photographer. In the centre of a hollow square he adjusted his camera with his customary deliberation. The result, unfortunately, was a failure.

The landscape now became less hilly, and of enemies we saw no more. I despatched a messenger to Mberara, the capital of Ankole, and the officials there sent out twelve policemen, who relieved us of our inconvenient charge. The explanation of the affair given us was as follows: A chief had died, and his tribe was divided into factions by a disputed succession. Hence the villagers had carried their feud into our provisionment; they would be warned not in future to let their local broils affect white men.

Round Mberara, famous for its majestic long-horned cattle, the country is undulating and continues so during the week's march to Masaka. The hills are quite low and sparsely sprinkled with cactus-trees that look from a distance like yews.

At Masaka a bare hilltop has been planted by an artistic Collector with oleanders and pomegranates. The interior of the Boma, or fortified enclosure, is a bower of roses, rampant rose-trees like those in Burne-Jones's pictures, with long branches ablaze with blossom all the year round. Lake Victoria lies only a few miles east of Masaka, and is frequently in sight on the road to Entebbe, which runs, for the most part, through fine " park-like " scenery.

My four days at that centre of civilisation, of dress-clothes and dinner-parties, of lawn tennis and football, were luxuriously spent in a bungalow hospital. A certificate that I had contracted two fevers relieved me from assisting my companion in winding up the accounts of our two months' trip.

At four in the afternoon on the day we left Entebbe our comfortably appointed steamer reached Jinga, where the Nile leaves the lake, and anchored a mile above the Ripon falls. To shorten the walk in my enfeebled condition, I got a native dug-out with fifteen paddlers, to row down as far as the ferry. The falls are of the class of those near Schaffhausen: they lack height. But there is a glorious rush of green water, five floods separated by tiny rocks, or islets, clothed in the most vivid verdure. Below the cascade is a great pool, where huge fish leap in the eddies and eagles circle overhead, and then for several miles the young river hurries on in a long rapid between high wooded banks, till a bend in its course conceals it from sight. It is a worthy birth for the Nile.

Another day was spent on the lake, and on the third from Entebbe we got into the train. We began to speculate how many and what beasts we should see. At first we scored rather slowly. There were, of course, hartebeests and springboks in hundreds. A large party of baboons, three giraffes, and several hyaenas next came in view. It was not till sunset on the second day that the train pulled up to give us a better view of a fine lioness which was strolling beside the line some thirty yards off. The station we came to five minutes later is famous for lions. Here, during the construction of the line, an unfortunate engineer was pulled out of a carriage in which he was sleeping, and devoured. The present station-master, an Indian, is credited—I cannot say with what truth—with having recently had occasion to send out the following telegrams: "Please send further police protection. Men very brave, but less so when roaring begins." "Please let 10 A.M. run up to platform disregarding signal. Signalman up post, lion at bottom."

The brief account in the preceding pages of my trip to the Great Lakes is substantially that which I rendered on my return to the Alpine Club.

Our failure in our main object, to climb Ruwenzori, was the result of the accounts given me as to the rainy months at Fort Portal by presumably well-informed authorities who assumed, incorrectly as it proved, that the seasons corresponded with those on Lake Victoria. But for the perpetual fogs, rainstorms, and floods that we encountered we should have had no serious difficulty in gaining the highest peaks. Ruwenzori, when its snows emerge from their impenetrable cloud mantle, presents no problems formidable to climbers trained in the Caucasus or the Selkirks.

In the following year, 1906, the Duke of the Abruzzi profited by our experience and, favoured by fine weather, made a clean sweep of the cluster of snowy peaks, ascertained their height—the highest is 16,873 feet—and carried out an accurate survey of the central group. His companion, Vittorio Sella, added to the many services he has rendered mountain lovers by his admirable photographs of the glaciers of the Nile and the weird forests and flowers of the glens they overhang.

The complete success of the admirably organised Italian party should do much to smooth the way for their successors. As soon as a road is made to Fort Portal the day cannot be far off when a visit to Ruwenzori may form part of the Grand Tour of Africa. Our British officials will doubtless find time and energy to cut and keep open trails to the heads of the eastern glens and possibly even to build some sort of shelter on the disused pass in the heart of the chain where the Duke camped.

The Mountains of the Moon are among the wonders of the world. They cannot, it is true, pretend to vie with the frosty splendours of the Alps, Caucasus, or Himalaya. But their scenery has an extraordinary character of its own, which must impress those—and perhaps most those—who are familiar with many of the great ranges of Europe and Asia. The landscapes of the foot-hills, enlivened by banana groves and beehive huts, by clusters of palms and red-blossomed trees; the deep bays at the base of the central range clothed in a belt of tropical forest, above which frowns the serrated crest of the Portal Peaks ; scenery of this kind may be found elsewhere. But the strange and fantastic aspect of the inner glens with their dark, smooth, gleaming walls rising tier upon tier, draped with belts of gigantic heaths, and their almost incredibly grotesque vegetation, is, as far as I know, unique. The extraordinary forms of the flora that flourishes in their pathless recesses tempt the traveller to fancy himself wandering among the relics of an earlier world ; they may remind him of the pictures of primitive epochs in the earth's history found in scientific handbooks, or of some phantasy of Gustave Doré or the Russian stage. The image of these primeval solitudes remains with me as the most extraordinary of my memories of travel.

In our case at least the general impression was one of gloom. Yet when a passing gleam slanted across the black and gold and lit up the lichens hanging from the heath-forest the effects of colour were superb. Beautiful also—when the pall upon the mountain lifted sufficiently to reveal beneath it the sunshine of the lower world—were the views eastward out over the broad valley and across the bright expanse of Lake George to the hills of Ankole, green as Apennines and glowing through the morning hours in aerial colours, more brilliant and translucent even than those of Italy.

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